

A
GENTLEMAN
INSTRUCTED
In the true Principles
OF
RELIGION,
With a full Confutation of
ATHEISM
AND
LATITUDINARIANISM.

The Second Part.

Written for the
INSTRUCTION of a YOUNG
NOBLEMAN.

Printed in the Year 1707.

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Epistle Dedicatory

~~I wait upon you to give
not to ask, and expect no reward
for my Pains, but a civil Re-
ception.~~

THE Publisher's

Epistle Dedicatory

TO THE GENTRY.

Gentlemen,

I Make bold to sue for a second
Audience, which I presume you'll
not refuse me. I have no Design
either upon your Kitchen or your
Purse; And will neither tempt your
Charity, nor importune your Libe-
rality.

Epistle Dedicatory.

ality. I wait upon you to *Give*, not to *Ask*; and expect no Reward for my *Present*, but a civil Reception.

Atheism, that grand Plague of the Living, and Torment of the Dead, rages in our Island: Now being solicitous for your Safety, and apprehensive of your Danger, I humbly offer this *Conference* as an Amulet against the Contagion; tho' it prove not an infallible Remedy against the Evil; I am sure it can do you no Harm: And then it has Cheapness, a most enticing Quality to recommend it. The Disease is easily catch'd; not easily remov'd: So that a *Preservative* is more reasonable than a *Restorative*.

Indeed those People whose Business is confin'd to their Lodgings, who live out of Sight, and rather work than sport themselves down, are almost below the Danger. But you move in a more elevated Sphere,
you

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you are design'd for Commerce, and Conversation; your Occasions draw you from Retirement, and your Diversions call you into Company.

Now when Infection becomes Epidemical; Crowds grow more dangerous than Solitude, and it may be presum'd, that among a Multitude some carry the Tokens, and perhaps the Plague-Soars upon them. It's therefore extremely hard for Gentlemen; who are eternally infested with Squadrons of Spungers, who are haunted by Parasites, that must sawn to live; and generally discourse more feelingly on the Excellency of a Ragout, than of God or Religion. I say it's hard, in such a Confluence, to escape the Breath of an Atheist, who by the Assistance of a voluble Tongue, and a good Forehead is able to scatter the Distemper; and if it once fastens on the Heart; it immediately posits to the Head; and

Epistle Dedicatorie.

when these noble Parts have inhibited the Contagion; it's odds, the Disease either carries you off; or at least waits on you to the Grave.

Besides, Curiosity and Pleasure, invite you to the *Play-House*, from whence you adjourn to the *Tavern*. Now both these Places are infectious, *There*, Atheism is brooded, hatch'd *Here*: The Tenets are learnt in the Boxes, and practis'd at the next Rendezvous: When Vertue is lash'd on the Stage before you, and Vice recommended. When you see Villanies carry off Applause, and Morality Confusion. When you hear Religion Revil'd and the very Author of it blasphem'd by some, and ridicul'd by others. In Time neither will stand very fair in your Esteem: You will be shrewdly tempted to think those Things cannot be very serious, nor holy, when Men publickly make Use of them for

Sub-

Epistle Dedictory.

Subjects of Merriment and Profanation.

But then when you strike off from the Pit to the Eating-House, surrounded with a Tribe of Hangers on, as slenderly provided of Religion as Money; what lewd Comments do these Rakes make on the Text? How do they snarl at Providence, and glance upon the Divinity, with a hundered *Innuendo's* which must be stamp'd with Wit (forsooth) because they are profane? Now these Blasphemies at a full Table; And over fuller Cups; When the Spirits are flush'd, and warm'd *i. e.* When Reason is fetter'd and Sensuality let loose, first meet with Applause, and then with Approbation; for certainly Men are never more dispos'd to deny God, than whilst they offend him; nor to take leave on Religion, than when they have lost their Wits.

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Agair

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Again, tho' we live in a degenerate Age, Religion has not lost all Reputation. A Man may go to Church without being gaz'd upon for a Monster, whilst Atheism seems at least to live under the disesteem of the Publick. Now to strengthen their Party, Atheists have Gentlemen in their Eye: They hope for Safety under your Protection, and Credit too under the Wings of your Authority: Hence they employ a hundred little Artifices to juggle you out of your Faith, and to hare you into Religion, and indeed you have a mighty Influence over the Vulgar; they model their Judgment by yours; your Aversion is the Standard of theirs, and what you approve, they dare not condemn. From you they take Fashions, Breeding, and even Religion. So that I wonder not Atheists aim at you: the Conquest of one *Noble Man* may be term'd *Legion*; for his Surrender

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render (like that of *Metropolis*) draws in the whole Province:

Moreover, God has favour'd you with *Esa*'s Blessing; the Fat of the Land is Part of your Inheritance, and by Consequence, Honours, Pleasures and Esteem; the common Sequels of Abundance. You run smoothly before the Wind, and sail on with a Prosperous Gale. Your *Halcyon* Days run through the whole Year; Earth, Winds, and Men, drudge for your Satisfaction and Interest. You confute *Job's Aphorism*, *Man born to labour*, and demonstrate by Practice, that Sport is the proper Employment of *Gentlemen*.

Now Prosperity is heady, it intoxicates tho' it delights; and not only dashes out the Memory of Things past, (like the River *Lethe*) but (what is more stupendious) of those that are to come. Men are so taken up with the Charms of the *Present*, that they have little Time;

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Time, and a less Inclination to cast away a Thought on the Contemplation of the *Future*; they love not to withdraw their Eyes, from the pleasing Objects of this Life; to fix them on the skaring Prospect of the other: And without Doubt, Gentlemen who have Pleasures before them would be as little dispos'd to enjoy them, as *Dionysius* the Tyrant, did they reflect what Torments stand behind them.

When therefore Things glide on successfully *Here*, its very natural to lay aside all Concern of the *Future*: And if we judge the *bad Things* of another World thwart the Enjoyment of the *good Things* of this; we shall first wish there were no such Place, and then from wishing a Thing were not, to believe it is not, is but a very short Traject for the Will and the Judgment seldom disagree, and if once you lop off the last Article of the Creed

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Credo *Vitæ waterum*, you must
throw out the first, Credo in De-
um.

Tho' Gentlemen lie open to these
Temptations, I do not say they are
always overcome, some bear up
with Courage against the Assault,
and force these lowd Suggestions to
retire. I know, Persons of Quality,
whose Vertues are more noble, than
their Blood, Providence seems to
have made them Great, that they
might appear more superlatively
Good. Like the Sun they scatter
their benign Influence on all below
them, and those they cannot warm
with their Munificence, they en-
lighten with their Example. But
however the Event of War is doubt-
ful, and the Danger certain: Where
Temptation reigns, there's no Place
for Security; and therefore by the
Laws of Prudence you are bound
to take the best Precautions: You
can-

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cannot be too sure when Eternity
lies at Stake.

I present you with a Conference
in which you will see the Latitu-
dinarian *non-plast*, and the Atheist
disarm'd, You may easily defend
your selves against these Sects, with
those Weapons *Eusebius* over-threw
their two Abettors, *Ariovistus* and
Theomachus; and if you will but
take the Pains to ballance the Light-
ness of their Defence, with the
Weight of their Impudence; you'll
rather pity their Silliness, than ap-
prehend their Reasons.

~~their design, and those they cannot warm
with their Minutiae, they en-
lighten with their Examples. But
however the Event of War is doubt-
ful, and the Danger certain: Where
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PRE

Preface to the Reader.

PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

Dear Reader,

I Offer to your Perusal, the Second Part of the Gentleman Instructed. It's a Treatise against Atheism. I hope it may be profitable; I am sure it is seasonable. It's Time to prepare for a Defence, when the Enemy has gain'd the Walls. When the Plague rages, and Death sits at every Door, its Time to think of an Amulet. In a publick Danger, Nature Commissions every Subject to fight for his Prince and Country, Unusquisq; naturaliter est Miles. Duty arms us, and Allegiance enters our Names in the Muster-Rolls. God lies under the most vile Circumstances of Insult and Outrage. Libertines make bold with his most sacred

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Sacred Attributes, they burlesque his Mercy, lampoon his Justice, and ridicule his Omnipotence, whilst Atheists attack his very Being, and fly in the Face of his Divinity: And shall a Christian stand an idle Spectator so bold, so daring an Insolence? For what were Tongues made, but to speak on such provoking Occasions? Silence is criminal as well as Neutrality, and not to stand up in our Maker's Defence when Atheists rifle his Majesty, and railly upon his Omnipotence is to band against him.

Some perchance may stand up and tell me, that Treatises of this Nature are not calculated for our Meridian. That they may be useful to the wild Patagons of America, or the stupid Hotentots of the Cape, but that Atheism is so great a Stranger to our Nation, that we are forc'd to fetch a Word from Greece to express it. We are rather oppress'd with the Light of a Deity than want it. We walk in the Sunshine of Knowledge: Not the Obscurity of Ignorance. And whilst we tolerate all Religions its ridiculous to suppose we have none.

But under Favour (Gentlemen) we need not sail to the Megalanian Straights, nor cut the burning Line to find an Atheist. These Monsters breed nigher Home; they spawn on our Shoar; they thrive in our Cli-

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Climate, and like the Egyptian Locusts overrun the Country: So that they are become an universal Nuisance to the Subject, and a Plague to the Realm. Stupidity and Education may plead for poor American Atheists at God's Tribunal; but cannot for ours. These are hatch'd in the Stews, and nurs'd in the Play-house; they take their Birth from Debauchery, and Growth, from barefac'd Malice. They pass thro' the whole Alphabet of Crimes before they touch this Non plus ultra of Impiety.

St. Austin complains these Vermin plagu'd his Age as it does ours, but yet they lay under Discipline, they walk'd abroad in cognito, and sculk'd under Disguise, *ideo dixit in corde suo non est Deus, quia hoc nemo audet dicere, etiam si fuerit ausus cogitare.* But now the Scene is shifted; Atheism stands no more on Reserve; it scorns to lie under the Repraach of Restraint, or the Shame of Confinement; it has laid down the Vizard, and appears in publick not only without Fear, but even with Impudence. Other Vices retire into Darkness and Solitude, like Bats, or Screech-Owls, they range in the Night; but Atheism braves it at Noon-Day, and forms itself into a Mid-Day Devil, *Demonium Meridianum.*

It

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It has remov'd its Lodgings from the
Stews, and Bagnio's, and other publick Scenes
of Lewdness to the Court. It has wheedl'd
into its Party, not only the Rakes; but the
Poets also, who like Slaves at the Oar, drudge
for the Cause. They rhyme down Piety, and
then laugh Religion out of Countenance to
turn it out of Doors. They draw in all
the Succours imaginable, but Reason and
Conscience: So that one would think they
intended a general Invasion upon Religion;
and resolv'd to force Morality to an Ab-
dication.

In King David's Reign an Atheist made
a poor Figure; he was content to wear the
Cap and Bauble; his Ambition look'd no
higher, than the Post of Scharamouch; di-
cit insipens in Corde suo non est Deus.
And indeed all Mankind together with the
Royal Prophet, voted him the Sation: But
it seems we have learnt new Notions of
Wit and Wisdom since the Decease of our
Ancestors. What men in their Days for
Stupidity and Folly; by the Hocus Pocus
of a new Creation, starts up Ingenuity and
Reason in ours. The most dull Creature that
dares disown his Maker, is dubb'd a Vir-
tuoso, and without any other Tryal of his
Abilities, is commended Doctor in the Aca-
demy of Rakes: For these Men having now
usurp'd

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usurp'd the Bench; they sit upon Wit, Breeding and Religion: Their Judgment is the Standard of Sense, and Scale of Nobility: So that whoever dares but doſſy God without Remorſe, without Shame, is a ſtrew'd Man, a Perſon of Parts, and a Gentleman without the Help of Heraldry, a Peer without the King's Patent; Nay, he is every Thing but a Man.

I wonder what they drive at, if they deſign to ſpread a Varniſh on the Face of Vice, to turn Lewdneſs into Vertue, and Brutality into Diſverſion; their Plot is well laid, their Meaſures are juſt, and Succeſs muſt crown their Endeavours: For if God be daſh'd out of the Creed; Morality will ſoon abandon our Actions. Man will ſtand on the ſame Ground with Beaſts: Reaſon will varniſh into Senſe, and ſo we ſhall fall below the Level of our own Species. Power will decide Right, Intereſt will define Honesty, and Revenge pronounce upon Honour, and then like diſmantled Towns we ſhall lie open to all the Inroads of Insolence, and to all the Affaults of Vice. Is not this a fine Method to cut off all the Lines of Communication between Man and Man? To throw all Government off of the Hinges? To drown Order in a Sea of Confuſion? To ſtack the Nation with thieving Arabians, and to let
loose.

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Loose upon our Bodies, an Army of Bloody Tartars?

And indeed our Atheists have Reason to crow; their Trick has taken to Admiration. Debauchery spreads so fast, that the Infection is become Epidemical, its above Expression; God send it be not also past Cure! One would think Cyrce had slipp'd her magical Potions hither; Transformations are so ordinary; and what raises my Suspicion is, because they all end in the Beast, and most in the Swine.

'Tis hard to assign the genuine Cause of this extravagant and unreasonable Vice. One told me, he was of Opinion, that our Navies had waisted it hither from the Indies, and that these Barbarians had battered their Infidelity for our English Ware. Certainly our Seamen carry aboard a small Cargo of Religion, and a less of Conscience: Both are a troublesome kind of Lading, and of no Debate: We must not wonder then, if a Crew slenderly provided of both, lose some Grains in the Trajeet, and more in those Regions where they see none. The African Infidelity may tincture their Hearts, as the African Sun tanns their Faces, and then at their Return, they may unlade the Atheism of Guiny with its Gold. Tho' these Apostate Mariners may sling the Infection

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fection among the Mob, they cannot reach those who move in a higher Sphere: But Swains lie too far out of Sight, to influence the Nobility; they are Creatures of too small a Size to set up a Fashion, too despicable to deserve Imitation.

'Tis certain nothing has contributed more to the Improvement of Atheism than the Liberty of the Press; like Pandoras's Box it has poured out all the Plagues of Schism, that for these hundred Years have plagu'd the Nation. They swarm in every Corner, and are become both a Drudge, and a Grievance. Like Toad-Stools, they start up in a Night, and what Wonder? Nature huddles up in a Moment, those Insects that spring from Stench, and feed on Corruption: They are for the most Part abortive Embrios, without Shape, without Figure, but not without Poison.

The Press however is now a Branch of our Property, and a Part of our darling Liberty; we think our selves fetter'd, unless we have the Freedom to snarl at the Prerogative, to vomit Blasphemies against God, and to revile Religion and Morality; and then that our Crimes may be immortal, and infect future Ages, as well as the present, they must appear in Print, to outface Modesty, and stare Vertue, Religion and Obedience

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dience out of Countenance. Certainly these People fancy Ignorance and Wickedness are charming Qualifications, why else do they take such Pains to stand Fools and Debauchery upon Record?

Alas! their Design looks another Way: would they content themselves with the Honour of Fools or Debauches, we would let them carry off the Prize; but they level at Piety, they strike at Religion, and aim by Reflection at the Almighty: And that their Train may take, and their Poison work with Efficacy, 'tis guilt over with soft Language, swimming Expressions, chiming Periods, i. e. they blend Poison with Poison to make the Potion stronger. Smut and Baudery are fulsome Objects in their own Dress; they rather work upon the Stomach than the Will; and are fitter for Scavengers than Gentlemen, when a little Art Casts a Blanch over their Foulness, and veils their Deformity, they enchant Sense, and stupify Reason; the Monster withdraws, and the Sound affects the Ear; whilst the Object lays hold of the Heart, indeed some stand upon no Ceremony, they draw the Statutes of scandalous Amours not in Busto but at length, without a Fig-leaf to cover their Nakedness. They appear under all shapes and in all Postures, but those of Decency. What Virtue

CAN

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can stand out against such murdering Engines? These Objects make Inroads upon the Fancy, they fire the Blood, and put the Humours in an Uproar; they fit the Reader for any Villany, and what is worse, point out the Occasion; Nay, our Authors stand not in Universals, they descend in particulars. They dissect Brutality, and expose Anatomy to View, and contemplation, which is a shrew'd Argument their Writings are only Copies, and that the Actions are the true Originals.

In a Word, the whole Cry of our modern Pamphleteers seems to have conspir'd against Vertue and Godliness, they canonize Vice, and deify Uncleanneſs; and by this Means they have run down Sobriety and set up Incontinence, they have brought Libertinism into Credit, and Morality into Contempt; and Things are come to such a Condition, that Conscience lies under all the Dreads of Reproach, and Apprehensions of Infamy.

Now when the Agenda of Religion are laid aside, the Credenda will soon be dismiss'd, as useless and Cumberſome. A Man that has but the Boldness to charge thro' all the Terrors of the other World, in good Time will laugh at them; and then because God takes not off Sinners in Flagrante,
but

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but leaves some Years between the Crime and the Punishment, he will be apt enough to conclude he is a meer Bugbear of our own Creation. To be short, the Press has not only effeminated the Mind, but unprincipled the Understanding, and therefore fitted us for all Dissolution. A Man without Principle is a Creature without Restraint; he is all Sense, all Appetite, all Beast, and infine, all Monster.

Now to put a Stop to this growing Vogue of Atheism, I have publish'd these Conferences in which the Atheist will see the Weakness of his Principles discover'd, and if he be not converted, I am sure he will be confounded. I desire these Nullifiers to read the Book without Prevention, without Byass; the subject is both serious and important, and therefore deserves unprejudic'd Reflections.

Now when the Agenda of Religion are laid aside, the Cerebenda will soon be dissolved, as useless and cumbersome. A Man that has the Boldness to charge the Terrors of the other World, is good for nothing. **THE** God takes not of Sinners in Religion.

A

Gentleman Instructed, &c.

D I A L O G U E I.

*How Theomachus became an Atheist,
set down as a Caution for all Young
Gentlemen.*

THE next Morning *Neander* took Coach, and drove directly to *Eusebius's* Lodgings. He walk'd up Stairs, and found his Friend in his Closet. Good Morrow (said *Neander*) last Night I brought you the Challenge, and now I come to carry you to your Antagonist. I hear he is strangely flush'd up with Hopes of Victory, and has call'd in some Friends to be Spectators of his Triumph.

Euseb. Atheists like young Narcissus's
B dote

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dote on their own Abilities; and because they are more proud than we, they very wisely conclude they are more witty. But (*Neander*) those who talk most, do not always talk best. Speaking and Reasoning are not always of the same Side, that lies within the Verge of a Fool, and this is the Prerogative of a wise Man. But pray why so early this Morning? Atheists and Libertines are now in their first Sleep; they are perfect *Sybarites*, and never open their Curtains till the Sun has drove over the *Meridian*: So that they live no less extravagantly than they believe: Their Actions cross upon Nature, as well as their Faith on Reason. But indeed we must fling in some Grains of Allowance; for whereas other Men sleep to refresh Nature, Atheists sleep to work out a Debauch. And as they drink poor Reason asleep, so they sleep it awake, and this Operation requires Time. I have read that the Morning Heats are admirable for Transpiration, they supply the Place of a *Bagnio*, and spare both Expence, and Trouble.

Neand. An Atheist cannot cross your Way, but you are presently on the Spur,

Spur, you make at him with full speed, and seldom leave the Chase till you are both run down: Have you forgot, That *Love your Neighbour as your self*, takes in both Infidels and Atheists too? And that whosoever is of your Species comes within the Pale of the Precept.

Euseb. I love their Persons, but cannot be reconcil'd to their Principles; I could heartily pity 'em, had they one grain of Compassion for themselves; but they are a Race of Men, that neither desire Pity, nor deserve it; they walk on the very Brink of the Precipice, and (tho' they know the Danger) shut their Eyes, that they may not see it, as if they plac'd their Happiness in their Ruine. In fine, *Neander*, they shall have my Prayers, but not my Esteem. But *a Propos*: May I not know my Antagonist's Name? I forgot this Query at our last Meeting.

Nean. And really I forgot to acquaint you: He is call'd *Theomachus*; he is in great Request, and speaks well, tho' he believes ill.

Euseb. *Theomachus*?

Nean. Why have you any Acquaintance with the Gentleman?

Euseb. I never exchange'd a Word with him in my Life: But a Man must have

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led the Life of a meer Recluse, not to have heard of *Theomachus*: He has been the Town Discourse these Thirty Years; and never Man has been more prais'd, nor more blam'd than he. I have heard a Thousand Panegyricks of his Youth, and as many Satyrs of his old Age, that leaves no place for Invective, nor this for Excuse: For as I have been credibly inform'd, in his tender Years he practis'd all Vertues, and since he began to decline, has plung'd himself into all Vices: He has not only debauch'd himself almost out of his Estate, but quite out of his Religion; he turn'd off Christianity for Libertinism, and from hence stept into Atheism; so that like *Lucifer*, from an Angel of Light, he is Metamorphos'd into a Spirit of Darknes, and has improv'd the Contempt of his Creator into open Rebellion; nay, he reads Lectures of Atheism to others, and so spreads the Infection, and makes his own Disease incurable; for if the Allurements of Pleasure are so bewitching as to perswade a Man in spight of Reason to live an Atheist, Honour will push the Illusion farther, and invite him to die one. I am sensible enough that we are more prone to censure our Neighbours Vices,
than

than to take Notice of his Vertues: In-
vectives flow more easily from us than
Panegyricks; and therefore I thought my
self oblig'd to suspend my Judgment of
Theomachus, till I found some better Evi-
dence than popular Reports, which often
times owe their Being to Mistake or En-
vy, and their Growth to a talkative Hu-
mour, and indeed at length I fell by
chance in the Company of one of his
Friends, who gave me full Satisfaction.
His Life has something of the Romance,
but more of the Tragedy; 'tis fitter to
Grieve, than to Divert us, and to melt
us into Tears, than into Laughter: Time
does not press; I will (if you please) run
over the chief Circumstances; tho' the
Narrative be not Diverting, I am sure it
will be Instructive: You will learn by his
sad Fall, that Man can find no sure Foot-
ing here, that Vertue lies within the Reach
of Temptation, and cannot only be as-
saulted, but overcome.

Nean. Pray, Sir, favour me with the
Relation; Instruction is never unseasona-
ble, and sometimes necessary, especially
to young Men, whose Nature bends
more willingly to what is Pleasant, than
what is Lawful, and who rather spur on
their Passions, than curb 'em; besides Ig-
norance

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norance waits on Youth, as well as Presumption. *That* hides the Danger; *This* provokes it; but both betray us. Pray begin.

Euseb. 'Tis a kind of *Postulatum* in Spirituality, that Men end as they begin, and die as they live; and indeed Experience teaches as well as Scripture; that the last Act of our Lives is but a Copy of the first. Vertue planted in the Spring of Youth, thrives to Admiration; it flowers in the very Winter of Age, it blooms in the Grave, and breaths forth Perfumes when our Bodies exhale Infection. Now if an early Vertue casts its Roots so low, that the Blasts of impetuous Passions are not able to shake it. Vice certainly will be more lasting; this is the Product of our own Soil, like poysonous Weeds it grows without Planting, and in Process of Time winds and twists it self with our very Nature; it sinks into our Bones, and not only conveys the Infection through all the Humours of the Body, but corrupts the very Faculties of the Soul; so that like cronical Distempers, it accompanies us to our Coffins, it sleeps with us in the Grave, and burns with us in Hell.

Tho'

Tho' this Rule be universal, it admits of some Exceptions; who court Sin in their Youth, sometimes detest it in their declining Years; and those who quench the unlawful Heats of Lewdness in the very Summer of their Lives, are consum'd by 'em in the Autumn of their Age; even then like *Mount Gibel*, they are Snow without, and Fire within; and this Providence permits, that the Saint may not presume, nor the Sinner despair. *St. Paul* was a Persecutor before he became an Apostle. He made a Martyr in *Jerusalem* before he suffer'd Martyrdom at *Rome*; and only propagated Christianity, when first he conspir'd its Ruine. What could be more Promising than the Beginning of unfortunate *Judas*? He receiv'd Power over Devils, as well as over Diseases; and commanded Nature whilst he obey'd his Master: But when Avarice prey'd upon his Innocence, Treason broke in upon his Loyalty, and Despair put an End to his Life, to begin the everlasting Punishment of his Offences: But we need not run so far back into Antiquity for such Examples; our Age can leave at least one President to Posterity in the Person of unfortunate *Theomachus*.

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This Gentleman seem'd born under so happy a Constellation, that all Things conspir'd to make him a Saint. At the Age of Twelve he had the Prudence of a Man of Twenty, an Air of Gravity ran thro' all his Actions, so that he had nothing of the Child, but Age and Innocence. The Seeds of a pious Education sown in a Soil so grateful, could not chuse but improve almost to a Miracle; and indeed, so soon as he heard to what End he was Created, together with the dread Mysteries of Christian Religion; that the Vertues of the Just would be Rewarded with an Eternity of Joys; and the Sins of the Impious with an Eternity of Torments: He never balanc'd on the Choice, but resolv'd to square his Life by the Rule of the Gospel, and to postpone all the Advantages of Time to those of Eternity.

His Conduct was an Argument that his Resolution neither flow'd from Childishness, nor Ignorance; he labour'd to put it in Execution with the same Eagerness he made it, and he told his Tutor one Day, that to defer the Execution of a good Purpose, and to break it, was the same Thing; that a bad Action should never be done, nor a good one ever omitted. He began first to model his Passions, and
punish'd

punish'd 'em like Traytors before they were able to rebel: He taught 'em to obey betimes, that they might never pretend to Sovereignty, and refus'd them all Things to baulk their Importunities; so that when he made his first Appearance in the World, and enter'd upon Conversation, he drew all Men's Eyes and Admiration upon him; he seem'd cast in a quite different Mould than other Men, and wholly exempt from the common Curse of Mankind; he fear'd those Things which others hope for, and ran from those vain Amusements they pursue: He plac'd his Wealth in the Purchase of Vertue, not of Land, and despis'd all Honour, but that which suits with a Christian: He look'd upon his Estate as a Property of the Poor, and therefore return'd them the Overplus as a Debt, rather than as a Benevolence; and when once a *Relation* desir'd him to shape his Charity by the Rule of Discretion: My Neighbour's want (reply'd *Theomachus*) is the Standard of my Alms, and I had rather drive my Liberality too far than too short: He never withdrew from those Diversions that recreate the Body without endangering the Soul; but then he could not be won to coun-

10 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

tenance a Debauch; and altho' this Nicety often expos'd him to the Scoffs and Raillery of those young Blades, that rated Pleasure above their Duty; yet he either detested their Malice, or pitied their Folly, and valued his Innocence above their Favour. We live (said he one Day) in a strange Age, and as strange a Kingdom, we profess a Reformation in Religion, and a Corruption of Manners: We believe what Christ reveal'd, and blush to practice what he taught: His Religion is *Alamode*, and his Precepts of Morality out of Fashion. Surely we pretend to justify the Lewdness of our Actions, by the Holiness of our Religion, as if true Faith were a Warrant for Immorality. Cannot a Man be well bred unless he lives ill? Nor condescending unless he gives up his Title to Heaven? Can nothing oblige a Companion but my Damnation? Nothing intitle me to good Behaviour but Impiety? This is certainly to confound *Ideas*, to settle false Notions, and to banter Things out of their Nature.

You may easily imagine such Lectures of Morality were unpalatable to those
young

young Sparks, who fix their Eyes and Thoughts only upon the present. They took the *Alarm* and immediately cry'd out, *Gentlemen to your Arms*. Young *Theomachus* (says one) is vastly pretending, he sets up for a Preacher without Holy-Orders, and enters upon the Ministry without Licence. Nay (replies another) he joyns Insult to Outrage, First by Impeaching our Conduct, and Secondly by making Inroads on our Prerogative. 'Tis a Gentleman's Privilege to sin without Reproof, as well as without Scruple, and whosoever advises us of our Duty, transgresses his own. We shall be cloy'd with Homilies unless we cool his Zeal, and sweeten his morose Complexion. I am not (says a third) for being always upon the Defensive, we must make a Diversion, and carry the War into his own Dominions. His Vertue I suppose is not impregnable; it may either be master'd by Force, or seiz'd on by a Surprise, and if our Enterprize succeed we shall gain a *Profelyte*, and lose a *Censor*. The Counsel was receiv'd with Applause, and presently they fell to work; they attack'd his Reason with Wine, and his Chastity with Women. But *Theomachus*

machus vented their Mines before they took Fire, and so cover'd his Adversaries with Confusion, and himself with Glory. Nay he painted the Fowlness of the Attempt in so lively Colours, that he brought over some to a better Life; and even those he could not persuade to repent, he taught to blush: And now he had obtain'd such a Superiority, that all those Hectors who could not love him, were forc'd to esteem him. His very Presence bridled their Passions, and kept them within the Bounds of Decency, and tho' he could not control their Thoughts, he was absolute Master of their Actions.

Thsomachus run on in this holy Course till the Thirtieth Year of his Age, respected by Men, and precious in the Sight of God. Never Man bid fairer for Perseverance than he; He had kept his Passions under such severe Discipline, that they seem'd rather dead, than mortify'd; they had obey'd so long, that they lost almost all Desire to command: He lay under the Violence of no ill Habits, no criminal Engagements, in fine he judg'd himself secure when he was within an Ace of his Ruine.

His

His Sister (affianc'd to a young Gentleman) invited him to her Wedding, she press'd the Invitation with that Earnestness, *Theomachus* foresaw she would not return with a Denial; he made notwithstanding some Resistance, and carried on his Excuses beyond the Laws of Civility, for he knew that Meetings devoted to Merriment, are often profan'd with Lewdness, or at least that Temptation crowds in with Youth and Gallantry, yet at length Importunity overcame his Constancy, and this Piece of innocent Condescendance first threw him upon Temptation and then tumbled him into the Precipice of Libertinism and Atheism.

Some of his *Relations*, Men of a gay Temper, were grown out of Conceit with his Moderation, and Reservedness, and therefore resolv'd either to bend his Vertue, or to break it. They hire a Woman, Fair as a *Helen*, but Lewd as a *Messaline*, she was one of those who prostitute their Honor for a fine Equipage, and first prey on young Gentlemen's Hearts, and then on their Estates. She was handsomely set out for the Employment, and well vers'd
in

in all the little Arts of Wheedling; nothing could be more engaging than her Conversation, her Humour was pleasant, and yet reserv'd: So that those that did not know her, would have taken her for a *Vestal*; she was well instructed in her Part, and promis'd to act it to the Life, nor did she fail in the Execution.

Theomachus on the Day appointed repair'd to his Sister's Lodgings, where he was receiv'd with open Arms; every one gave him the Welcome, but *they* forew'd up Civility even to Affectation, who had laid the Train to blow up his Vettue: And now the deceitful *Syren* I spoke of began to enter on the Stage. She continually plac'd her self before him, and took him out to dance a *Milmet*; she found Occasion to entertain him, and sometimes in private. *Theomachus* was first charm'd with her Conversation, then he fought it, and in fine he found an Uneasiness when he was out of her Company; in a Word, his Passion made such Progress in the Space of two Hours, that he was scarce able to Master it: This *Basilisk* had shot the Poyson thro' his Eyes to his Heart, and its Operation was so quick, that

that the pestilential Flame almost consum'd him before he well knew the Cause of so strange an Alteration; he blush'd within himself to submit at the Age of Thirty to a Passion, he had conquer'd at Twenty, and concluded that Magick had a greater Hand in his Overthrow than Nature, but 'tis a Folly to impute to Philtrums and Incantations those Effects which spring from our selves, and rise out of our own Corruption.

He endeavour'd to pen up his Passion within his own Breast, and fear'd it should take Air, but Love is a Flame that cannot be confin'd, it breaks out in spite of Opposition, and works its Way thro' all the Masks of Dissimulation. A certain Gloominess sat on his Face, Cheerfulness gave Place to Melancholly, he shew'd an Uneasiness in Company, and a Dissatisfaction in Solitude, all wonder'd at the sudden Alteration, but no Body more than himself. Some call'd the Distemper a Fever, others a Weakness, but all mist in their Conjectures, besides the Viper that shot the Poyson, and the unfortunate Gentleman that receiv'd it.

Theo-

Theomachus pretended Sickness, and so withdrew to his Lodgings, but he trail'd the Dart after him, it stuck in his Heart, and he neither had the Courage to disengage it, nor Resolution enough to support the Torment: He hated the Pain, yet doted on the Cause of it, and even seem'd to tast some Happiness in the very Height of his Misery. But Oh! When he compar'd his past State with the present, the sweet Calms of a vertuous Mind with the boisterous Tempest of a distemper'd one; he thought himself fallen from Heaven into Hell, and confess'd nothing was wanting to compleat his Misery, but the Eternity of his Torments. His Fancy drew out a Landskip of all the dismal Consequences of so unruly a Passion; and Reason told him 'twas Time to prevent them, but he relied too much on his Vertue, and suppos'd it invincible, because hitherto it had not been overcome. He thought his Power over Passion was as absolute, as God over the Sea, and if he bid it stop within the Bounds of Decency and Innocence, it durst not disobey. But alas! Vertue must not without great Precaution be put to the Test. If we trust it too far, it often gives

gives us the slip, and by a most just Judgment from Heaven, too great a Confidence ends in Ruine.

In fine *Theomachus* was impatient for a Second Interview; he concluded no Harm could follow because he intended none. That there was no Danger of Sin because his Thoughts were innocent, nay he was now flown up to such a Height of Extravagance, as to persuade himself, that the Impetuosity of Appetite is sooner tam'd by Liberty than Restraint, and that like some capricious Horses, it runs faster when you draw in the Reigns than when you slacken them. Thus he fetch'd Arguments from the Stable, and play'd the Jockey rather than the Christian.

His Companions made him a Visit, and easily perceiv'd the Cause of his Disease. They prais'd his Passion, applauded his Choice, and very Religiously offer'd their Service in this amorous Adventure, *i. e.* they saw a *Relation* on the Brink of the Precipice, and would by all Means favour him with a civil Push, for you must know (*Nemander*) there is a Race of Men in this City, who entrench upon the Devil's Employment, or rather are his Deputies,

ties, they tempt by his Commission, and damn their Friends out of Kindness: They are more successful and more dangerous than their Master, because less frightful, and then they edge the Temptation both by Example and Counsel.

Theomachus's ill Fate drew him to a Second Visit; this made Way for a Third; yet he stood to his Resolution, and kept within the Limits of Modesty: But in the mean Time, the Fever of Love heighten'd and the malignant Humour past through the Eyes to the Heart, and from thence fum'd up to the Brain, so that now the Disease not only infected the Will, but tainted the Understanding. He began to venture on greater Freedoms than stood with Vertue, and in a short Time plung'd into Debauchery: But when he retir'd into his Closet, and Solitude gave Time for serious Reflections; Grace open'd his Eyes to see his Fault, and they dropt Tears to deplore it; he learnt by Experience, that the Pleasure of Sin bears no Proportion with the Torment of it, that the Delight is Momentary and the Pain may be Eternal. And now he seem'd resolv'd not only to hate his Crime, but even the

the Cause of it: But those Debauchees who had been the Instruments of his Fall dash'd all his Pious Resolutions, and at length not only depriv'd him of Liberty, but of the very Desire to regain it.

Tears (says one) have no ill Grace on a Child's Cheeks, they become also well enough the weaker Sex, who oftentimes plead their Cause with them when Reasons fail, and so at the same Time redress a Greivance and discharge the Brain: But they argue an unpardonable Weakness in a Man, and raise a shrew'd Suspicion he has either over-liv'd his Judgment, or never had one; you have made a false Step, and who does not trip sometimes? Let your Heart ask Pardon, not your Eyes. Repent (if you please,) But why must you despair? But before you pronounce upon your self, examin whether you are guilty? Appeal to Reason, not to Fancy, Prejudice, and Education: those are always upon the Hurry, and because they raise a Dust, they never see Objects in their right Proportion. God is a *Father*, not a *Tyrant*; if he has laid some Precepts upon us, he never intended to over-whelm us. Why did he create Eyes, but to see? Or Ears, but to hear?

Will

Will he permit us to behold nothing but Monsters? Or to smell nothing but Stench and Infection? This is to make our Senses a Burthen, rather than a Blessing, its to turn into a Curse the very Benefit of our Creation.

No, no, *Theomachus*, when God fram'd our Senses capable to receive Pleasure, he created Objects fit to give it, and I am of Opinion, that Pleasures of the Sense have nothing Criminal but Mistake. I thank that great Deity that made me, for the Favour of my Creation; I pay him Obedience every Day, and commit my Self to his Protection: Now if at the same Time I indulge Nature, and give it a Play-day, where is the Harm? Must he be offended, because I am pleas'd? Or cannot he be happy, if I am merry? Indeed I declare against those who fly in the Face of Majesty; who burlesque his Goodness, and lampoon his Justice; those are Attempts against his Person, overt Acts of Hostility, and Rebellion, they are Crimes of the first Class, and if they are not punish'd with Fire hereafter, at least they deserve it. Speak honourably of God, pay your Workmen, injure no Man, and you cannot miscarry.

The

The Gentleman has Reason (says another) he has spoken like a Man of Parts, and Merit. I lay once under the same Mistake as you *Theomachus*, and never enjoy'd my Freedom till I eas'd my self of the Yoak of Conscience, and Restraint: Qualms damp't all my Pleasures, and melancholy Specters flung Wormwood into all my Diversions; but I have reason'd my self out of these splenetick Vapours, and laugh at these fantastick Monsters; they once tormented me; but (continu'd he) what if there be no God? What if you flash into nothing when you cease to Breathe? And that Fear and Hope sleep in the Grave? Will your Vertue then convey you to Heaven? Or your Sins to Hell? Be first sure there is a future State, before you part with the present. When you can demonstrate there is a God, 'twill be Time enough to serve him: Tell me not the Being of a Deity is past Debate, nor that all Nations conspire in this Belief; Matters of this Nature are not to be put to Vote, they must not be Judg'd by Plurality of Voices, Reason must decide the Question, not Numbers; Truth is Truth, tho' all the World deny it; and Falshood is Falshood, tho' all abet it. Peruse these Books with an
unpre-

unprejudic'd Mind, with that he laid on the Table *Hobbs, Spinoza*, and other Pamphlets, the Spawn of our Age, and the Plague of our unhappy Nation.

This new System of Divinity stunn'd him, he knew not whether he should receive it with Laughter or Indignation, for tho' on the one Side, he suppos'd they jested, yet on the other, they play'd on too serious a Subject: Tho' he had forfeited his Innocence, he had not yet took Leave of Religion; so that he could not endure to hear the Decalogue traduc'd. Vertue levell'd with Vice, and God himself degraded by a Pack of Atheists, who have no other Reason to quarrel with his Being, but because he curbs their Lusts, and lashes their Conscience with Scorpions.

But the Devil of Love that possess this unhappy Gentleman, began to rise again, he perceiv'd that Indulgence had whetted his Passion, instead of blunting it; and that it was impossible to gratifie Sensuality without provoking Conscience. In this Agony between Fear and Desire he first cryed out; if these Gentlemen's Tenents are not true, they are at least convenient, they give full Scope to Sense, and reconcile Conscience with

with Pleasure, then he wish'd they were true, and after a Pause, Perchance they are (said he.) Latter Ages have discover'd a new World, why may they not a new Truth. At least there is no Harm in examining their Principles. If they prove satisfactory, I may enjoy my Passion, if not, I am resolv'd to stifle it. Thus did Atheism make its Approaches by Degrees, it work'd at first out of Sight and under a Disguise, and then turn'd poor *Theomachus* out of his Religion and Wits too.

He fell upon the Books with so great Eagerness, that he seem'd rather to devour, than read them: And when he fell upon the *Panegyrick* of Human Reason, or an Invektive against Prejudice and Education: This is fair Dealing (said he!) This is to build on Principles; to stand on a sure Foundation; we cannot go astray under the Conduct of Reason; Interest cannot break in upon its Integrity; it acts without Byass, without Partiality; its Judgment is infallible, and its Decisions Oracles. Prejudice and Education are the Bane of Truth: They so crowd our Heads with old Species, that they leave no room for new ones; so that
we

we neither act out of Custom or Spite.

But he had done well to consider, that they who invest our Understandings with the Prerogative of Infallibility are infallibly *Coxcombs*, that they are great Strangers to Reason, who think it above Error, and that they are certainly mistaken, who suppose it cannot be deceiv'd. 'Tis true indeed, Prejudice and Education oftentimes rather leads us from Truth, than to it. And it is more secure to make the Enquiry alone, then in their Company, but when Men declame against them without Mean or Measure, 'tis a Sign they are tainted with the Disease, for where there is Heat, there is no Indifference: And so they only condemn one Prejudice with a greater.

However the Books infected him, they convey'd the Contagion from his Heart, to his Head: So that within a short Time, his Disease came to a *Crisis* which prenosticated nothing but Atheism. He found a strange Charm in the Stile, their flourishing Periods struck him with Admiration. He thought a Vein of Wit and Elegance ran through all their Discourses, so that he was never tir'd with

with reading nor praising them: The worst of Things were presented him under a handsome Mask, which made them pass; Poyson will not go down unless it be gilt or made palatable, and for this Reason generally the worst Books are writ the best; barefac'd Impieties rather move us to Indignation than Love, and therefore, those who expose them to the publick View, take Care to set them off in a gaudy Dress, to veil their real Deformity under beautiful Trappings. I know many are of *Theomachus's* Opinion, and make strange Discoveries of Wit in these Authors, where I find nothing but Blasphemy. But some Men are born under a happy Constellation; they have the good Fortune to be dubb'd Wits, meerly for scoffing out of the common Road, and taking the Confidence to deride those sacred Mysteries, the greatest Part of Mankind reverences; which certainly is no more an Argument of a Man's Wit than of his Piety: But 'tis a Demonstration that an English Atheist was in the Right when he said, *when Reason is against a Man, then a Man will be against Reason.*

You must not wonder if *Theomachus* once intoxicated with Atheistical Wit,

26 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

was soon bewitch'd with Atheistical Arguments; every Sophism seem'd conclusive, and Demonstration sparkl'd in every Period. You would have sworn those Gentlemen's Arguments were as evident as Mathematical *Postulatus*; or that they prov'd their *Thesis* by *Appollonius* or *Euclide*: But after all, they build on Guesses, and ever beg the Question but never prove it. Sometimes they flirt at the Government of the Universe; then at God's justice; and sometimes again at his Mercy; and because they cannot reconcile these two Attributes, they suppose they are incompatible; as if Man's Reason (that cannot comprehend a Flie) were able to grasp an Immensity. However these Arguments which rather work on Fancy than convince the Understanding, debauch'd *Theomachus*, and because he could not, or would not solve them, he thought them unanswerable.

Sometimes he would adjourn from his Closet to the *Coffee-House*, and venture upon a Dispute; and when he was put to a Plunge, he laid the Miscarriage rather upon his own Ignorance than on the Cause he manag'd. So besotted
was

was he of his new Masters. Infine the Employment of *Theomachus* jumps with his Name, and his Morals with his Faith: He is a perfect Atheist, *that is*, without Religion, and by Consequence without Morality: He acts as he be- lieves; and the only Apology for his Vices, is the Corruption of his Princi- ples.

Tho' this unhappy Gentleman abandon'd God, God did not abandon him; he struck him with a Feaver which in some Days brought him to Death's Door, and the Doctor deliver'd him this doleful Message, *Sir you must die.* He who before discours'd of Death, as if he had been Immortal, broke into a Fit of Impatience and Distraction; he scarce knew where he was, much less what to resolve on; he saw he could not live, and yet he would not die. This Strife between Life and Death, cast him into strange Convulsions; and the Loss of the present with the Fear of the future, set all the Humours of his Body in a Ferment. God awak'd his Conscience which flew in his Face, and set before his Eyes a whole In- ventory of his Crimes. He started at the Sight of these ghastly Monsters,

and fear'd himself more than Death, nay more than Hell; for 'tis more to deserve those Torments, than to suffer them. Oh, cry'd he, there is a God! Sickneſs that has almoſt kill'd my Body quickens my Underſtanding! From theſe laſt Moments of Time, methinks, I take a Survey of Eternity; and behold there a Judge who will puniſh me, if I die in Obſtinacy, or reward me if I breath out my Soul in Repentance! Oh! I will fly to his Mercy rather than abide the Impartiality of his Juſtice! His Goodneſs exceeds my Malice; he can pardon more than I am able to commit, and will receive me into Favour, if I ſue for it with Humility and Contrition. In ſhort, he ſent out ſuch fiery Ejaculations, that they ſeem'd to flow rather from the Breſt of a *Seraphim*, than of a Man. He deteſted Atheiſm with all the Cauſes of it, and wiſh'd he had loſt his Eyes, before they look'd upon thoſe ſcandalous Books, that corrupted his Will, and poiſon'd his Underſtanding: He water'd his Bed, in a very literal Senſe, with his Tears; nor could all the Perſuaſion of his Friends ſtop the Current. He now had no Regard for his Body, that was once his

his Idol ; nay he wish'd that Sorrow would rather put an End to his Life, than Nature. But *Theomachus* beyond Expectation recover'd, and what is amazing, relaps'd into his old Disease: Scarce did he enjoy the Favour of a perfect Health, but he spurn'd at his Benefactor, and fell into those Abominations he so lately detested ; as if God varied with our Constitutions, and vanish'd into nothing when we are well, and revives when we lie on our Death-Bed.

This is an Abridgment of *Theomachus's* Life, and I have been more particular in the Narrative, that you may learn by his Misfortune, and draw some Advantage from his Miscarriage: We may date his Ruine from the Rise of his Passion ; tho' debauch'd Company, and lewd Books compleated it. Love sunk the Mind ; Conversation and Reading put Fire to the Fatal Train, that blew up *Theomachus's* Vertue: And from this tainted Spring flow those unheard of Abominations, that almost drown the Nation. Had not the Printers so much Work, the Preachers would have less ; but now the Press declares War

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against

against the Pulpit, and the Hawkers scatter the Defiance.

Neand. This is a strange Story; and had I it from another, I should be tempted to doubt whether Man be capable of so great Inconstancy. Certainly it deserves a Place in History. I may perchance be tempted (with your Leave) to expose it to the Publick.

Euseb. I leave that to your Discretion. Lets not forget our Atheist; its Time to take Coach.

DIALOGUE II.

Whether there are any real Atheists.

THEY walk'd down Stairs, and when they were in the Coach: Pray (said *Neander*) give me your Opinion; are there any such Creatures in the World as real Atheists? They say this Vermin swarms, and like the *Egyptian* Frogs crawl into the very Bedchambers of Princes.

Euseb.

Euseb. Atheism is a meer Sound, an insignificant Word, a modish Bluster; but in Truth there is no such Monster in Nature, as a down right Atheist: I mean no body in his Senses can seriously persuade himself *there is no God*. Men may Huff and Hector in a Rendezvous of Rakes and Bullies; they may Swear they Believe no such thing; and in a raving Transport of Debauchery defy it; but then you must take all this for nothing but *Cant* and *Bravade*: The denial sits on the Tongue alone; 'tis rather a Wish there were no God, than a serious Profession there is none; for whilst they mock this pretended Nothing; they tremble at the Apprehension of it; they fear its Anger, tho' they deny its Being: So that those we call Atheists affect to appear what they are not; and by a strange Frenzy, lay to their own charge a Crime they are not guilty of: And indeed the Perswasion that there is a God, is rooted in Nature; we owe it neither to Education, nor Study: As our Maker has stampt his Image on our Foreheads; so he has also engraven'd the Knowledge of himself in our Souls; and altho' Debauchery may deface the Characters, it can never destroy 'em.

Nean. Pray let us drive Home again : I thought we had been on an Expedition against Atheists ; but I perceive they are Enemies of our Coining ; they are meer Phantoms that flash from Fancy, and only serve for Satyr, and Invective. What did that great Champion Dr. *Tillotson* enter the List against *Chymeras* ? Did he Duel with empty Apparitions ? And Fence with Shadows ?

Euseb. Mistake me not ; I told you there were no real Atheists. *Id est* ; that no Man can be so far convinc'd *there is no God*, but still he fears there is one. Let him draw up a whole Legion of Atheistical Arguments in *Batallia*, they cannot secure the Understanding from Frights and Suspicions ; for tho' they may look under the false Lights of Prejudice and Partiality very plausible ; yet they cannot convey to the Intellect, Evidence and Demonstration.

But then there are a world of limping Atheists, who walk between a God, and no God ; *that is*, who says there is no Deity, and act as if there were none ; and yet at the same Time suspect there is one. This is that Race of Men we call Atheists, who have dismiss their Understanding, and Reason with their Will.

Nean.

Nean. Under Favour: I must trespass upon your Patience, and crave farther Instruction; for as yet I walk in the Dark, and do not apprehend your meaning: Cannot the Being of a Deity be justify'd by Arguments, that flash Conviction?

Euseb. Yes, it can.

Nean. It seems then impossible for the Understanding even to doubt of a Truth, that presents its self in the glittering Equipage of Demonstration; for it is not Master of its Acts, as the Will; it lies under the Command of Necessity, and is compell'd to acknowledge Truth if it appears in Person.

Euseb. The Propositions of *Euclids* are all Demonstrations; and yet a bare cast of the Eye on the Lines, or the Titles, do not send Truth in Post to the Brain: We must first see what the Author would be at; then we must put *Antecedents*, and draw *Consequences* before we can discover that Light, which flows from the Schemes to the Head, and gilds the Understanding. Now an Atheist is sick of a Deity; and therefore will make no Acquaintance with those Arguments that prove one; they come upon too ungrateful a Message to find a kind Reception; and generally

when they ask an Audience, the Will denies Admittance; or at least it cuts out so much other work for the Understanding, that it can find no time to give 'em a full Hearing: Like a Minister of State it hovers about the Prince, and obstructs free passage to his Presence: But then, when Arguments for no God appear, the Will puts on foot a Hundred little Intrigues to ensnare the Understanding; they are trickt up for Delusion, and fitted for Deceit:

Near. I perceive 'tis a fine thing to be a Dupe: Why else do Men take such pains to impose on themselves: But can Men cheat themselves into Reputation? Or are there so great Charms in being over-reach'd? I thought it was every Man's interest there were a God; and therefore (methinks) it were more reasonable to Believe one, than to wheedle ourselves into Infidelity.

Euseb. No doubt, it's the Interest of Reason, but not of Sensuality. A Man who takes pleasure for the Rule of his Actions, must lie under strange Apprehensions at the very Thought of another World. The dreadful Glory of an exasperated Deity; the fiery prospect of boiling Brimstone, and the horrid Portraits

traits of the infernal Executioners, cannot chuse but work upon the most resolute Debauchee: Sins tho' never so pleasant, with the dismal Consequences of Judgment and Damnation, sit very uneasy on his Conscience, and counterpoise the Sweetness of the most refined Sensuality with Gall and Wormwood. Now these Creatures of Pleasure, who cannot resolve on Repentance, have found out a short way to plaister up a Peace with Conscience: They commission their Lusts to draw upon the Understanding, and compel it to deny, or at least to doubt of those Truths, that alarm them: And it cannot be deny'd but all inordinate Lusts byass the Intellect, and make it fit to receive those Impressions which favour Passion. When Men live as if there were no God; 'tis extremely expedient for them, there were none; and when once they are come so far, they catch at all those Arguments which may fortifie them in this Persuasion; and these joyn'd with the Charms of Interest, abate the dread of a Divinity. 'Tis true all these pretty Artifices are never able to secure them against the Buries that rise from another World.

to haunt them. *Perchance there is a God, perchance there is a Hell*, fright them into their Solitude and Retirement, and sometimes into Taverns too: Yet they have gain'd one Point by doubting, which they look upon as a very considerable Advantage, *viz.* That they may live Rakes, and die Atheists, without being sure there is a God to call them to Account, or a Hell to punish 'em; and certainly a Man may be said in some Degree happy, that is not sure he shall once be eternally miserable.

Now you see the Heart has carried on the Contrivance, and from this Apostem'd Member flows the Corruption of Atheism. And to cut off all Doubt; why do the very high flown Atheists desert on their Death-beds those Principles they once admir'd? Why do they turn Renegadoes to Atheism at the last Gasps? Have they receiv'd new Lights from Doctors and Apothecaries? No, no; they have left the World behind; Pleasures are now out of their Reach; and past Happiness almost out of their Memory. They fancy at least an Eternity before 'em, Fire under their Feet, and Vengeance over their Heads. These dismal Meditations cool Passion, allay Lust, and change

change the Heart; but work no Alteration in the Understanding: So that I may conclude with *David*; *the Fool said in his Heart there is no God*. Atheism lodges in the Breast, and a Deity in the Head. Men do not believe a God because they will not; to gratify Sense they disoblige Reason; and hugg Infidelity to fear Conscience.

D I A L O G U E III.

Eusebius and Theomachus meet and agree on the Preliminaries.

SCARCE had *Eusebius* ended, when the Coach stopt at *Theomachus's* Lodgings, who expected him with a Young Gentleman we call *Eudoxus*. This Blade was a great Pretender to Wit; and to follow the Stream of Custom would make the first Essay of it, in a Critick of Religion: He receiv'd the Rudiments of Latitute in Arianism from *Ariovistus*; and was grown a wonderous Proficient in the Science of Impiety: He pass'd the
Line

Line of Christianity; and altho' he had not yet touch'd upon the Point of Atheism, he was arriv'd (as *Ariovistus* us'd to talk) at the *Cape of Good Hope*; in fine he yet acknowledg'd a God, admitted all Religion and would condemn none.

After some mutual Civilities: This is the Gentleman (said *Nean.*) I spoke of Yesterday: If Victory favours you, I hope you will give him fair Quarter for my Sake

Theo. Never fear; tis more glorious to use a Victory modestly, than to gain one. I had rather receive a Foil from *Eusebius*, than be subdued by Insolence. Rest secure (continued he, with a Smile) if Fortune takes my Side, your Friend shall have Reason to be satisfy'd with me; I'll immediately release him, on his *Parole* not to bear Arms against Atheism, till he be better inform'd.

Euseb. I am much oblig'd for your Civility; if I fall under the Weight of your Arguments, I abandon my self wholly to your Generosity. Prisoners of War (like *Minors*) are incapable to Anticiple; they lie at the Mercy of the Conqueror, and must receive Conditions, but can make none. But Sir, I must beg

beg Pardon for my Rudeness; For altho' *Neander* told me you earnestly desir'd a Conference, yet I am sensible, that its neither Gentle nor Handsome to salute a Stranger with a Dispute; nor to make Acquaintance in a Duel: But Sir, I come here to discourse, not to contend. I seek Truth which (like Pearles) is only found in a Calm; and unless we all resolve to abandon Error when we perceive it, 'tis better to forbear the Engagement: For if we look upon the Conference as a Tryal of Wit, and persuade our selves its more dishonorable to own an Error than to defend one in spite of Evidence; we shall take a great deal of Pains to discompose our selves; and then the Question will be; who has most Passion, not who has most Reason: For when a Man is pincht, and will not surrender; when his Reasons are weak and his Obstinacy strong; he calls in Heat and Passion to his Assistance; the only Supports of a sinking Cause: And I take it for granted, that a Man never wants Arguments to relieve a drooping *Thesis*, but he supplies the Want with Noise and Clamour.

Theom. You speak my Thoughts; Reason forc'd me to deny a God, and when
Reason

Reason tells me there is one ; I will submit to its Dictamens. I never wed an Opinion for better, for worse : What I took up on good Grounds, I lay down upon better : I do not hug a Mistake, nor Pride in an Error, nor ever laid Claim to Infallibility. I cannot well comprehend what those Pretenders to Science would be at, who fasten on the first Notions, and will no more part with them, than a Spaniard with his *Basket Hilt* or *Golilia*: They fancy surely that Truth swims on the Surface, and that the best Thoughts lie always uppermost ; but then they would do well to consider, they give Children a considerable Advantage over Men ; for Knowledge will no more be the Consequence of Time and Experience : We shall live no more to learn Wisdom, but to be fix'd in Folly. In a Word, I will no more enslave my Understanding, than my Person ; and I value at as high a Rate the Liberty of Thinking, as of Acting. Convince me there is a God, and I'll take my last Farewel of Atheism.

Euseb. Indifference is an Excellent Disposition ; we seldom pursue Truth without Prejudice, but we take it. I have a Favour or two to beg before we begin,
CORTI-

continued *Eusebius*. First, let us speak by Turns: I am no Friend to Noise, and cannot be reconcil'd to those fiery Disputants, who fling out Arguments, one upon the Back of the other; yet will not have the Patience to receive one Answer: This is not to confer but to wrangle; and altho' it may become the Skippers of *Wapping*, or the Oyster-women at *Billingsgate*, yet it suits not well the Breeding of Gentlemen. An Argument propos'd with Noise and Blustering, may break the Head and dismount the Brain, but it never makes Impression on the Understanding; Truth like a gentle Shower, soaks through the Ears, and moistens the Intellect.

Theom. I was drawing up that Article, and am glad you have forestald me; you are of my Temper: I would have a Dispute manag'd with Vigour, but not with Heat; that inspirits Conversation, this confounds it: Notwithstanding, Disputing is hot Service, I confess, and generally is perform'd with too much Eagerness to be successful; nay I was once acquainted with a most even temper'd Man, who after he had drawn Blood, as I may say, and was flesh'd in Pole-

Polemicks, never weaver'd his good Humour afterwards.

Euseb. I must also desire you, to avoid Mistakes, to call in an *Amanuensis*. When our Answers and Objections are committed to Paper, and sign'd by both Parties, there will be no Fear of Misrepresentation. I have often seen a Conference in Print nothing like the Original; and he who crow'd in the Pamphlet, cry'd craven in the Chamber. *Theomachus* presently approv'd the Proposition, and sent for an *Amanuensis*: So that now the *Preliminaries* were agree'd to, and all Things seem'd ready for the Engagement.

But *Eusebius* who saw a great Intimacy between *Eudoxus* and *Theomachus*, suppos'd they were not much divided in Opinion; and therefore that he might attack them both at the same Time, if he lean'd towards *Deism*, desir'd to know his Principles. Sir (said he, addressing his Discourse to *Eudoxus*) I hope without Rudeness I may ask what Religion you profess? We are now met to discourse of that Subject, and perchance yours may come within the Reach of these Arguments, I intend to level at Atheism. In *Italy* and *Spain* such Questions

stions are superfluous ; and in *France* when you find a Man no *Papist*, you conclude he is a *Huguenot*. But our Island is more prolitick, it yeilds annual Crops of Religion, as well as of Corn. One Grain of Faith sprouts up into a Hundred : And I am told, that you may poll the People more easily than their Tenets : So that Religions rise and fall as well as Men ; and therefore, with Submission to my Lord *Major's* better Judgment, I would have the Mortality of Churches put in the weekly Bills, together with that of the Inhabitants.

Eudox. Liberty and Property are the Birth-right of every freeborn English Subject : And I see not why the same great *Charter* should not enfranchise his Belief, as well as his Goods and Chattel. *England* (Sir) is a nice Nation ; I may add, and pious also. We pay Homage and Obedience to the Lord, and will stand for his just Rights and Prerogatives ; but then we forget not our darling Liberty ; we respect him as Children, not as Slaves, and walk in his Ways with Freedom not in Trammles.

Euseb. You acknowledge then a God.

Eudox. I do. I am also persuaded there is a Heaven, and think there may possibly

possibly be a Hell; these Articles I subscribe to: But no Man shall stretch my Faith to an other Tenet, or command my Obedience to a *Canon* more. This is my *Non plus ultra*; what lies on the other Side of these Points, is an unknown Region to my Faith, tho' not to my Opinion. I confess I do not understand what God is, tho' I adore him; yet I know enough to admire his Greatness, and my own nothing. I love sometimes to loose my self in the Labyrinth of his Perfections; to pursue my Reason to an, *Oh Altitudo!* In my Retirement, I pose my Apprehension with the intricate Attributes of his Eternity, Goodness and Justice; and those very Objections that startle another Man's Faith, confirms mine: To believe what I can prove, is rather Science than Faith. I recreate my self therefore with his Goodness, and confound my Understanding with his Eternity; and put all Suggestions of Infidelity out of Countenance with this old saying of *Tertullian, Certum est, quia impossibile est.*

I read no Casuist but my Reason; and am of Opinion, that God pardons some Sins as easily as we commit them: My Conscience is neither of Steel, nor of Wax; heavy Offences batter it, but a
Pecca-

Peccadillo of Infirmary makes no Impression. I thank God, all my Sins have Names, and are rather Friends to Sense, than Enemies to Reason; they neither attack God, nor wound my Neighbour; they only refresh sometimes my drooping Spirits, and gently purge Melancholy. In my solitary Thoughts, I compute and cast up Accounts with my Maker; and I find such a Confidence in his Mercy, that my youthful Failings are not able to fright me. Nay (methinks) I am tempted frequently to offend, that I may have the Satisfaction of asking Pardon: And no Meditation carries me so fast to God, as that of his Goodness, which forgives with so much Ease those Transgressions that hurry me from him.

Now if any Man will quibble upon my Symbole of Faith, I can easily forgive him. I cannot be angry with another's Judgment for disagreeing from mine: And tho' I think my self in the right Way, I dare not conclude, my Opponents are in the wrong. Each Religion is but a different Road, that meets at Heaven; and if some will walk on in the Streight Path, charg'd with a Lumber of Articles, Precepts, and Cere-

Ceremonies, let them jogg on ; their Burthen will not load me : If they love to sweat under their Devotion, I vote 'em that Satisfaction : If they will not communicate with me, I have no Scruple to converse with them ; their ill Nature shall not influence my Charity : I can enter into a Papist Church, and either pray with them, or for them ; the Place cannot Profane my Prayers ; wherever the Creator is, he may be ador'd ; and therefore at *Constantinople*, I would enter into a *Mosque*, or into a *Pagode* in *Bengale* or *Siam* ; for if a Mahometan's or Idolator's Prayer offend's God, mine may please him ; if theirs pollute the Place, mine may sanctifie it ; for if they direct their Devotions to a Statue, or Impostor, I offer mine to God ; and so rectify the Error of their Worship, by well ordering mine.

Euseb. Tho' your Life be strait-lac'd, your Charity is comprehensive. I suppose the Universality of this, must atone for the Singularity of the other. Well, Sir, in a Word (continued he) you profess one Religion, and approve all ; and so fall into the Class of Latitudinarians : You are a Leveller, and would bring into the World an Equality of Religions, as well

well as Goods and Dignities. You lye then under the same Latitude with *Theomachus*, and the stroke that hits him will wound you. Well, Sir (addressing himself to *Theomachus*) choose your Weapon; are you for the Offensive or Defensive.

Theom. Let us have our Turns; we will engage on equal Terms. But you are in my House; the Laws of Breeding and Civility command me to give you the Precedency. I leave it therefore to your Choice.

Euseb. I see you are resolv'd to overcome me with Civility, before you vanquish me with Reason. But I will not contend with you at this Weapon. I accept your Offer, and will offend your Principles, before I defend my own.

D I A L O G U E IV.

The Atheist cannot be sure there is no God, nor the Latitudinarian that all Religions are saving.

Euseb. I Suppose neither of you, are so satisfi'd with your Religions,

gions, as never to be haunted with Fears, nor scar'd with Doubts and Apprehension; for nothing can secure the Understanding and fix the Judgment, but Evidence. Now I cannot persuade myself, that any Atheist, Libertine, or Latitudinarian dare venture on so bold an Attempt, as to thrust on Mankind those Arguments for Demonstrations, that under a fine Appearance hide nothing but Falshood and Sophistry. I doubt not indeed, but the Will may by-pass the Understanding, and force out an Assent; but then this can be no more steady, than meer Philosophical Conclusions, that fly no higher than Opinion: For whilst each Side of a Contradiction bids fair for Truth, we cannot tell on which Side it lies, and so float on Uncertainties; and tho' we judge the *Thesis* true, we fear it may be false. I will therefore for once deal more generously with you, than I am oblig'd in Reason: I will (I say) grant that your Tenets are doubtful; but then when I do you a Favour be pleas'd to do me Justice, and confess, that 'tis probable there is a God, and that there is one reveal'd Religion. I only ask what you cannot refuse without Injustice, for certainly

tainly if we appeal either to the Tribunal of Reason, or Authority, I shall carry my Cause; for the Asserters of a God plead for his Existance with solid Reasons; whereas you meerly beg the Question you are to prove, and bring no more but a bare Possibility for the Support of your Hypothesis: And then; you can pretend no right to Authority. The Founders of Atheism and Libertinism were look'd upon as Monsters in the very Places they liv'd, and deserv'd Punishment for their Lewdness, before they suffer'd Banishment for their Impiety.

Epicure and *Theodore* were profligate Wretches; their Morals run even with their Divinity; they exterminated Vertue with Religion, and debauch'd both Practice and Principle; their Scholers have out-done both the Originals, and improv'd both Irreligion, and Impiety. Now Men who are a common Nausance to their Country, a Misfortune to the Age they live in; and an eternal Shame to their Species, can have little Authority with those, who have one Grain of Kindness for their Nature; they are better qualify'd for the Bar than the Bench; and more fit to suffer than to witness.

But those who avouch for me; are as admirable for Learning as Piety; they are without Number, and above Reproach: So great Authority back'd with weighty Reason, must be confess'd sufficient to make our Opinion probable, I might say certain; but I wave the Advantage, I may claim both in Equity and Justice, and only ask what you are too reasonable to refuse, *viz.* That it is *Probable at least there is a God.*

Theom. I have read all I could find on this Subject; and am forc'd to confess, our Authors have promis'd more than they are able to perform: Their Demonstrations for *no God* leave (me thinks) some Apprehension there *is one*; and I find 'em work more efficaciously upon my Understanding in Company, than in Solitude; and in Taverns, than in my Closet.

Euseb. That is; when Sensuality has started the Game, and Passions are on the Wing; when Appetite pursues criminal Pleasure, and Conscience checks you with the dismal Apparitions of Hell, and Judgment; then the Will is too hard for the Understanding; it turns the false End of the Prospective, and magnifies these Arguments that favour Lust, and sollicite for Liberty: But then again, when the
Hurry

Hurry is over, and your discerning Faculty lies under no restraint nor fallacy; when it contemplates the Proofs for *no God* in their just Proportion, it wavers with Fears; and tho' on the one side it concludes there is *no God*; yet on the other it suspects *there is one*. Now, Sir, I do not ask what your Opinion is, when Passion runs down the Understanding; when Desire debauches it, and Sense flings Reason off the Hinges; but what it is when your Intellect acts without Bribery, without Illusion, without Partiality.

Theom. Well; that we may rid our hands of Preliminaries, and enter upon Action. I'll condescend so far, as to grant, that it's doubtful whether there *be a God, or no God*; and much good may the Concession do you.

Euseb. Eudoxus! will you enter into the Treaty? It's better to compound *a l' amiable*, than by Force.

Eudox. That is; unless I fairly confess, it's doubtful at least, whether all Religions are Saving; you'll compell me by Dint of Argument.

Euseb. Right; and pray put me not to the Labour of proving a Truth that discovers it self; and even glairs upon the Understanding.

Eudox. I know not what Impression this Truth (as you are pleas'd to call it) makes on your Organ: Methinks, it affects not mine; and I am perswaded, That a Man of moderate Parts may prove *ad Evidentiam*, that all Religions are Saving; but I willingly decline that Task, not to prejudice the Subject; yet I'll venture to propose one Argument, that offers it self to every Man, and may be comprehended by a Child, tho' not evaded by a *Divine*.

Euseb. Such Arguments deserve Respect, and it's pity to bury them in Silence and Oblivion.

Eudox. Raillery a part: What can God require of Man, but Worship, Love, and Obedience.

Euseb. Nothing.

Eudox. Therefore whatever Religion a Man professes; if he Worships God as his Creator; if he Loves him as his Father; and Obeys him as his Sovereign; does he not discharge himself of those Duties God's Excellence demands, and his dependency? Does he not comply with all the Branches of Subjection? Does he not stand within the Bounds of Submission? Now; what Religion does not teach its Profelytes to prostrate before
God's

God's Majesty ? To love his Goodness ? To dread his Justice ? And to receive his Laws with Reverence ? Indeed the Manner of Worship is not Uniform ; it varies with the Climate, and is adapted to Men's Constitutions. Presbyterianism jumps with a Republican Genius ; and for this Reason was most nicely establish'd in *Scotland*. The Laws fence Prelacy in *England*. Popery bears all before it in *France, Spain and Italy*. The Alcoran bewitches the *Levant*. *Amida and Xaca, Japan*. The *Laplanders* bow to the red Cloath, and some *Islanders* to a Baboon's Tooth : Yet these different Worships meet in the same Center, and terminate in one God *blest for ever*. I have not sprung this Divinity ; I owe it to a late reverend Bishop, who maintain'd it with Applause against his Popish Adversaries ; the the Ancient Pagans neither Ador'd Stocks nor Stones, but the *Invincible, living God*, under the Shapes of *Mars, Apollo, and Jupiter Opt. Max.*

If therefore Men of all Perswasions Worship God ; why shall they forfeit all Right to his Mercy ? Why shall loyal Subjects be confounded with Mutineers ? Or suffer for Treason they never dreamt of ? If they do not agree in Ceremonies, they

do in the Substance: Tho' sometimes their Bodies bend before an Idol; their Hearts fall a Sacrifice to their Creator; and whilst their Intention goes right, their Actions cannot go wrong.

Euseb. Air your Demonstration *Eudoxus*, it smells of Brimstone, and rather proves the Author will be damn'd, than that all Religions are Saving. Methinks, it has so black, so monstrous an Aspect, that it rather frights, than convinces: A Man must be below the Standard of human Nature; he must have something of Savage, and Devilish too in his Composition, to bolt out such killing Doctrine in cold Blood. Pardon my Heat, I am not Master of my Resentments in so provoking Occasions; and when can Passion be innocent, but in such an extraordinary Circumstance? But pray, can God reveal a Religion?

Eudox. Doubtless he can.

Euseb. If therefore he Reveals one, and Commands all Men to Embrace it under Pain of Damnation; I suppose the Precept is Obligatory in *England*, without the Consent of the great Representatives, the Lords, and Commons in Parliament.

Eudox.

Eudox. Yes certainly, God's Power goes higher than the *Negative* Vote; his Will alone is a Law, without the Concurrence of either House.

Euseb. If therefore he has Reveal'd a Religion, and commands all to embrace it, under Pain of Damnation; what will become of your Demonstration?

Eudox. Why faith, like a disabled Soldier, it shall trudge to *Chelsea*, and take up with the *Invalides*; for Arguments that have receiv'd on Duty Scars, deserves Consideration as well as Soldiers. Prove he has Reveal'd one, and I am yours.

Euseb. Expect not a general Muster of those Arguments Christian Divines draw into the Field against Infidels; this is a Task above my Force, and requires much Application; nor does our Controversy require it; for my present Business is not to convince you, that Christianity is evidently *True*, or evidently *Credible*; but only, that its probable at least, God has Reveal'd it, and commands all Nations to embrace it. If I can discharge my self of this Attempt with success, my Design is at an End.

Well Sir, there are Christians in the World ; and if we walk back into past Ages, we shall find that Jesus Christ was their Founder; this is a Truth that admits of no Debate; it cannot be question'd by those who act like Men, and yield to Evidence. This Jesus was born in a Stable, and past thirty Years in Poverty and Obscurity. Then he began to preach, and confirm'd his Doctrine with Prodigies, he gave Health to the Sick, Light to the Blind, and even Life to the Dead: At last he died by Mans Malice, and reviv'd the third Day by his own Power ; he sent twelve Fisher-men to subdue the World to the Law of the Gospel ; they obey'd his Command ; Success waited on their Labour, and crown'd their Endeavours ; so that in some Years the Christian Religion spread its Conquests beyond the Bounds of the Roman Empire. Prejudice, Libertinism and Atheism conspir'd its Ruine. Philosophers oppos'd Arguments, Emperours Torments, and Libertines the omnipotent Attractives of Sensuality. Yet Christianity broke through the Violence of these Oppositions, it multiplied by Disputes, and encreas'd by Persecution. Ten Millions of Martyrs lost their Lives in the Quarrel ;
they

they demonstrated the Truth of their Creed, by the Constancy of their invincible Valour; and tho' they sunk under the Excess of Torments, they overcame, nay oftentimes by the Force of Miracles they turn'd the very Executioners into Confessors, and the Tyrants into Martyrs: In fine Christian Religion has always appear'd holy, always victorious, always attack'd by the Impious, and always triumphant over Impiety.

Now if we consider the Means Christ made use of, to raise this Empire over the Hearts and Consciences of Men; we shall find them diametrically opposite to all the Rules of human Policy; and had not this great Design been first laid, and then carried on by God himself, it must have prov'd an abortive *Embryon*, i. e. an Attempt contriv'd without Prudence, and follow'd by Disappointment.

First, the Articles to be believ'd were extraordinary, and rather seem'd to revolt the Understanding, than to deserve Credit. A God; One in Essence, and Three in Persons, appear'd a Paradox in the Position; and *God made Man* a Blasphemy to the Jews, and a Folly to the Gentiles. Tho' the Resurrection of the Dead might be good News to the Virtuous,

tuous : Yet it could meet with no kind Reception from the Vicious ; it was more capable to enflame their Anger, than to work upon their Belief, and to make them Enemies, than Abettors,

Secondly, the Precepts of Morality cross more on Sense, than the *Credenda* seem to clash with Reason : They bridle the Sallies of corrupt Nature, and not only put a Restraint upon our Actions, but even on our Desires : They regulate every Motion, and bind up every Appetite to its good Behaviour ; they inculcate nothing but Mortification, Persecution and self Abnegation in this World ; and reserve Pleasures for the Future. They brought into the World a new System of Morality, they condemn'd those Vices which Sensuality had deified, and canoniz'd those Vertues that were persecuted by some, unknown to others, and condemn'd by all. Nature indeed bids us love our Friends, but Christ commands us to stretch our Affections to our Enemies : We must return Favours for Injuries, Kindness for Hatred, and revenge Affronts with Pardon : We must Place our Wealth in Poverty, our Glory in Ignominy, and our Ambition in the Conquest of Heaven.

Such

Such mortifying Doctrine in all Probability was more likely to skare People from Christianity, than to draw 'em to it; and no doubt (as *Gamaliel* said) it had began and ended at the same Time; its Rise and its Fall would have had but one Epoque, had not God by the divine Influence of his Grace, conquer'd the rebellious Hearts of Men, whilst the Apostles set upon their Understanding with the Force of Reason, and Miracles; that Mahometism should delate it self to a prodigious Extent, is not strange; it attacks Men on their weak side, its Maxims fawn on Nature, and flatter Sensuality; it permits Crimes, and promises Impunity; and yet it was announc'd by the Sword, and press'd on Mankind by Fire, and Devastation; it went no farther than the Barbarians Conquest: And the *Levant*, with part of the *Indies* were Slaves before they became Mahometans: But the Increase of Christianity is owing neither to Armies, nor Battles; it overcame the World by suffering Humility and Persecution; and God made use of poor, ignorant, and weak Men, for the accomplishing this great Design, that his Power might appear the greater.

Now

Now, that what I have told you is true, what Surety do you require? To bid me shew you these Matters of Fact, is Childish; to call for a Mathematical Demonstration is Ridiculous; and both impossible: We cannot be assur'd of Things past, but by Oral or Written Tradition; both which stands for me. I can bring you Avouchers of all Ages, and of all Countries: Some writ what they saw; and seal'd their Writing with their Blood; others have handed down to Posterity what they receiv'd from their Predecessors: In a word, a Man that will not believe Facts contain'd in my short Account, by the same Rule must believe Nothing; But to wave farther Dispute, and not to enter into the vast Ocean of this Controversy, I will only desire you to grant, that 'tis Probable Christian Religion was Reveal'd by God.

Eudox. Well, I grant your Request, but then we shall be just where we were; for still half your Task will remain undone: For tho' God has Reveal'd this Religion, by what Logick will you infer, that he commands all Men to embrace it.

Euseb. I thank you for minding me of my Duty, and I will discharge my self of it

it in a Moment. First, Christ bids his Apostles promulge his Law to all Nations: Then he says, that those who are Baptiz'd and Believe, shall be Sav'd; but those who will not Believe, shall be Condemn'd; that he will laugh at those before the Angels, who shall blush to confess his Name on Earth: In fine, his Apostle tells us, we can be Sav'd in no other Name but that of *Jesus-Christ*. These Passages proves my *Thesis* without the Trouble of Inference; they are plain without Gloss or Comment.

Eudox. Right, if you can assure me the Places you quote are *Canonical*, *id est*, either deliver'd by Christ, or at his Command, by his Apostles.

Euseb. Why, Sir, you can no more question the Places I cite, than the very Existence of Christ, and of his Apostles; for they stand on the same Bottom; Tradition that establishes the one, confirms the other,

Eudox. Well, well, go on.

Euseb. Thus much therefore I have gain'd; 'tis doubtful *whether there be a God or no*: 'Tis doubtful *whether Christian Religion be not the only saving Religion in the World*.

Theo.

Theo. You have ; pray make your Advantage.

Euseb. I will Sir, and hope to improve my Advantage so far, as to demonstrate that Atheists, and Latitudinarians seem to loose their Reason the first Moment they abuse it; and that, tho' they pretend to square their Belief and Conduct by the Rules of the most refin'd Prudence, they fail most wretchedly in the Execution.

Theo. I perceive *Eudoxus*, we must presently away to *Bedlam* ; it will not be amiss to lay in Provisions before hand : But *Eusebius*, you have much Business on your hands, and before that be dispatch'd your Head may be in some disorder also : To your Task if you please.

DIALOGUE V.

It being supposed Doubtful, whether there be a God, or whether all Religions are Saving: The Atheists and Latitudinarians expose themselves to extream Hazard.

Euseb. **W**E are agreed at present Theomachus, that both these Propositions are uncertain: *There is a God; There is no God; and you Eudoxus are on the same Termes with me concerning these two: Any Religion is Saving. The Christian Religion alone is Saving: If therefore it be true there is a God; 'tis certainly false there is no God; but then if it be true there is no God, by the same Rule 'tis false there is a God: Again, if it be true all Religions are Saving; then 'tis false the Christian Religion alone is Saving; but if it be true the Christian Religion alone is Saving; then 'tis also false all Religions are Saving: For God who can do all Things, disowns the Power of placing Truth in both Members of a Contradiction. Now, Gentlemen, I enter upon my Proof.* When

When two uncertain Opinions lie before me, I am oblig'd by all the Laws of Prudence, to chuse that which cannot prejudice me much, tho' it chance to be false, and will turn to my Advantage if it happen to be true ; and on the contrary, 'tis an infallible Symptom of a crasy Judgment, to close with that, which tho' true promises an inconsiderable Gain, and threatens me with Ruin and Destruction, if false. This may be laid down as a *Postulatum* for Practice, and is no less evident, than any Axiom in Mathematicks is for Theory. By this Compass the wise Statesman steers his Course ; by this Card the thriving Merchant sails, and the cunning Gamester models his Play by this infallible Maxim. A wise Prince before he engages in an Expedition, draws up the whole Prospect of Gain, in case Success crowns his Enterprize; and that of Loss, in case it end in Disappointment and Mis-carriage ; he weighs his Hopes with his Fears ; the Hazard of losing, with the Probability of gaining ; and will never embark himself in an Enterprize hand over head : When he knows (tho' Success follows his Standard) he shall only master an inconsiderable Village, or a contemptible Town ; but if it flies over to his

Enemies

Enemies, his whole Kingdom will be the Reward of their Victory, and the Price of his Defeat: On the other side, if a Prince falls upon his Neighbour, at least with equal Forces, and knows (if Fortune favours his Arms) he shall subdue a Kingdom; and tho' it frowns he can only loose an abandon'd Bourg, and perchance not even that; in this Case, tho' he be disappointed of Success, he carries off the Title of *Wise* and *Prudent*; he play'd his Game well, tho' he lost the Set; and every Man must be so just to his Merit, as to confess his Venture was prudent, tho' not successful.

A Merchant manages with Prudence and Caution his Affairs, when he has brought the whole Mystery of Trading to such a Point, that his Gain may be excessive, and his Loss cannot be considerable: But should a Man of Traffick and Commerce, put Twenty Thousand Pound a board a leaky Vessel, and send it to the Indies, through as many Dangers as there are Shelves in the Sea, or Winds in the Compass, with the bare Hopes of gaining Six-pence; would not you, and all the World post him up for a Madman? Would you not think him

him fitter to lie in *Bedlam*, than to walk in the *Exchange*?

Theom. Yes surely, I would judge him very rich, or superlatively Foolish; and would *Duck* and *Drake* away my Money, rather than confide it to his keeping.

Euseb. Should a Man lay me Ten to One at *Cross* or *Pile*; I suppose you would call me wise if I took the Bet? But then, if I should turn the Tables, and stake a Million against a Farthing; would you not brand me with Folly and Extravagance? Would you not conclude that either I knew not the true Value of Money, or thought it a Burthen? For, at this rate I should drain a Treasure in a Moment, greater than that of *Porosy*, and turn Bankrupt in spite of good luck itself.

Theo. You can run out in Positions that are undoubtedly true: Pray wheel about to the Application; methinks you shoot at random.

Euseb. I am for you presently: When two Propositions are uncertain, by the Rules of Prudence you ought to chuse that which cannot prejudice you, tho' it chance to be False; and will infallibly turn to your Advantage, if it prove True. On the contrary,

ry, 'tis an extream piece of Folly to regulate your Conduct by that Opinion which will lead you into Ruine and Destruction, if False; and cannot better your Fortune, or improve your Interest, tho' True. Now, those Propositions are suppos'd by us uncertain; There is a God; There is no God: All Religions are Saving; Only the Christian Religion is Saving. You are therefore both oblig'd in Prudence to embrace those Opinions which will prove highly advantagous to you, if True; and will bring no Disadvantage if False.

Theo. We Subscribe to your Conclusion.

Euseb. But you embrace those Opinions which if False, hurry you into eternal Misery; and if True, are not able to advantage your Happiness: What then remains but this Consequence; That you both forsake those glorious Rules of Prudence and Reason so much extoll'd by Atheists and Latudinarians, and never regarded when they act by their own Principles?

Theo. Ho Sir! You have been poreing on Monsieur *Pascal*; at least you are not (I am sure) of the Society; for those good Fathers will not stoop so low as to

to take up Arguments at second hand, or to use Weapons beaten on that Gentleman's Anvil.

Euseb. Under favour; Arguments are not like Cloaths, the worse for using: Nay, methinks, a Proof that has been on frequent Service, is like those veteran Soldiers, who neither start at the Noise of Musquets, nor the Report of Canons. Sir, let us not wake Monsieur *Pascal*, he sleeps quietly in his Grave; and if he has laid Crimes at the Jesuits door they were not guilty of, he has long since cry'd *Peccavi*; he has Answer'd for his Letters at God's Tribunal, and either receiyes Hell for the Punishment, or Heaven for the Reward of his Labours: Tho' some have question'd his Charity; no Man ever doubted of his Wit; and I am pretty well convinc'd he press'd the Atheists more home with this Argument, than he pinch'd the Jesuits with his Dialogues: However let us step softly over him; the Gentlemen of *Port-Royal* are good Friends, but dangerous Enemies; and if you attack one, you draw the whole Fraternity upon you.

Theo. Well Sir, I deny, tho' this Proposition be False *there is no God*, I can receive any Disadvantage.

Eudox.

Eudox. And I am of the same Opinion, tho' this happen to be False, *all Religions are Saving.*

Euseb. Let us then for the present suppose this Proposition is False *there is no God*; therefore this is True, *there is a God*: Now if there be a God, he is Just.

Theo. He is.

Euseb. Therefore he must, and will punish those who transgress his Law, and question his Authority: For he acts no less against the Laws of Justice, who winks at Crimes, than he who martyrs Innocence: This, we call Tyranny, and Oppression; that, criminal Indulgence, and Partiality; both clash with Justice; the one exceeds a Mean; the other falls short of it: Now God cannot act with Justice, unless the Punishment bears some Proportion with the Offence: Seeing therefore there is an Infinite Distance between the Offender and the Person offended; the Punishment must be in some sort Infinite; but it cannot be Infinite in Intention; therefore it must be in Extention, or Continuance.

Besides, the Lives of the most refin'd Debauchees, run on in a never interrupted Series of Prosperity; they neither groan

groan under the Pangs of Sickness; nor the Throws of Poverty; they enjoy the Blessing of Health; and wallow in Abundance; their Undertakings, tho' laid with Folly, come off with Success; and so they carry off Profit and Applause, tho' their Conduct deserves Disappointment and Contempt; they sail on prosperously with all Winds; and if sometimes they stick upon a Rock, they only perceive the Danger, to get off with Pleasure. Now seeing God is Just; and does not drag out these Malefactors to Execution in this World; 'tis clear they will feel the Weight of his just Resentment in the other: So that *Theomachus*, if there be a God, you see what expects you hereafter: Justice, Revenge, Torments, and Misery.

But then, if Christian Religion be True; and the only Saving Religion in the World; the Scene is shifted from bad to worse; from Horror, to Amazement: And you *Eudoxus* are in the same Misfortune with your Friend. Tho' the Light of Nature tells us God will crown his Friends in the next World, and chastise his Enemies: Yet the Light of Nature cannot particularise either the Reward, or Punishments. This *Ar-*

canum

canum we owe to Divine Revelation alone; and we have Grounds sufficient, at least to make it highly Probable he has Reveal'd it; and if it be True, that he has, the Atheist and Latitudinarian play *Cross* and *Pile* at an excessive Disadvantage; they stake an Eternity of Happiness, and another of Misery against a Bauble; for they cannot loose the first without falling foul on the second; like accursed *Cain's*, they will be banish'd from the Face of God, and carry on their Foreheads a perpetual Mark of his Vengeance; and their Reprobation: They will frie in Pitch, and flame in Brimstone without Pity, without Compassion, and (what is worse) without Term, without Annihilation; and can Fancy frame a greater Torment, than always to be barr'd of the Sight of God? And always to desire a Glimpse of that Infinite Beauty? Than always to burn and rage with Devils? And always to despair of Releasement? To these strange Misfortunes do Atheists and Latitudinarians expose themselves, *if there be a God; and if Christian Religion be the only Saving Religion in the World;* and for ought you know both may be True.

Theo. You follow your Adversaries with so much Heat, that you wound your self in the Pursuit; your very Arguments destroy your *Hypothesis*; and whilst you suppose there may be a God, you very learnedly demonstrate there is none.

Euseb. You have a mind to sport, but Jest is never improve into Arguments, nor can Raillery grow up into Reason.

Theo. Sir you mistake, I am not in a jesting Humour: Pray if there be a God, is he not Merciful?

Euseb. He is.

Theo. And if you suppose a God, and at the same Time prove, that He is unjust, unmerciful, nay tyrannical and savage; do you not pull down with one Hand, what you raise with the other? Does not your Proof fly in the Face of your Position? You say if there be a God, I shall feel the Weight of his exasperated Anger for all Eternity: I shall glow in Pitch, and boyle in Brimstone: What is this but to clap the most exorbitant Tyranny on Mercy it self? To blend Cruelty with Meakness? Barbarity with Justice? To sink an infinite Mercy into Cruelty? And to turn God into a *Chimera*?

You

You may perchance scare poor Children, or silly Women with your *Quivedo's Visions of Hell*; and swell his Fancies into divine Revelation; but Men are not so easily impos'd upon. I know if there be a God, he is merciful; and that it is not Mercy's Office to butcher, but to pardon: Besides you confess, that God is the Model of all Perfection: That our Vertue is but a dark Beam of his. How then can he command us (*as you say he does*) to revenge Affronts with Favours? To lay down our Lives for our Enemies; when he prosecutes his, with Racks and Flames? Either therefore there is no Hell, or no Mercy in God; and then there will be no God: Take which Part of the *Dilemma* you please; I shall be pretty secure against future Contingencies: So that you see we Atheists, and Libertines walk on more even Ground than you imagine.

Euseb. I might return your own Argument upon you; and shew that you run his Mercy so high, that you quite discard his Justice: But I will wave this Advantage, and single out your Reasons; which rather amaze, than convince. You say God's Goodness hinders him from taking any Cognizance of Crimes in the next
E World:

World: Therefore it is lawful to trample upon his Majesty; to controul his Orders; and to spurn at his Commands: He who so dotes on our Persons, cannot revenge the Offences: Therefore Blasphemy, Murders, Adulteries, and all those Crimes that outrage Nature, and put even Atheists to the Blush, are but indifferent Actions; they have no more harm, than what flows from Vision, Prejudice, and Imagination: For were they Crimes, they would deserve Punishment in the next World: Now Mercy ties God's Hands, according to your new System; and absolves the Criminal. Hence it follows, that seeing no Action deserves Punishment; no Actions are Crimes; and by Consequence there is no Law, for every Crime is a Transgression of the Law. This is a comfortable Doctrine for Whores, and Rogues; and you deserve a Pension from Goals, and Baudy-houses: Such Helps as these keep up the Trade, enrich the Hangman, and break down all the Barrieres of Shame, to let into the World a Deluge of Lewdness, and Abominations. Thus whilst you plead for God's Mercy, you solícite for Vice, and turn Advocate for Impiety.

I grant God is Good, and Merciful ; and we need no other Evidence to illustrate this Truth ; but that you breath, and enjoy the common Blessing of Mankind : Had not God rather follow'd the mild Inclinations of his Mercy, than the more severe Laws of his Justice ; Punishment had trod on the Heels of your Crimes ; he had tore you from your Debaucheries *In flagranti*, and left not a Moment between the Sin and your Damnation : But, *Sir*, he has fore-gon his Right, and taken more mild Methods ; he has bore your Insolence these many Years with Patience, and call'd you to Repentance, when he might have deliver'd you over to Punishment : Nay, I am told what bold Returns of Ingratitude you have made for his excessive Kindness : You have (more than once) in the very Face of the Sun, to the Scandal not only of Religion, but of Humanity ; spit in the Face of this Infinite Mercy : You have burlesqued his Goodness, and profainly deny'd he ever saw your Crimes, or hated 'em ; because he did not revenge 'em on the Spot, and put an End to your Life, and Blasphemies the same Moment : Yet after all these flaming Attempts against his Pre-

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rogative,

76 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

rogative, and Person; you not only live, but receive continual Favours from his Munificence; he expects only a *Peccavi* to seal your Pardon and to cancel your Offences; but if you will stand to your abominable Principles, and droll upon his Menaces; if you will push on Obstinacy to the Grave; he will soften your hard Heart in Flames, and teach you by a dismal Experience, that he wants not Mercy, but that you do not deserve to feel the Effects of so amiable an Attribute.

In short, God is good, because he created so vile a Creature as Man, to so high a Fortune; because when our first Parent *Adam* withdrew himself from Duty, and engag'd his whole Posterity in open Rebellion, he was pleas'd to assume our Nature, to expiate our Sins with his Blood, and to breath into our Souls a new Life of Grace by his Death; because he sets a thousand Wheels on Work, to draw back Sinners to Repentance, and generally gives them Time, and always Grace to look into their irregular Conduct, and to detest it: These are undoubted Marks of a most solid Goodness; and by this Square, God commands us to model our Behaviour towards our

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Enemies, and he has laid before us so compleat a Pattern, that we shall never be able to reach it.

But then God has Regard to Justice, even when he seems to abandon himself totally to the Conduct of Mercy; for these Perfections which stand at the Helm of Government are never at Variance; their Advice is Uniform, and both conspire to banish Confusion, and to establish Order; for God's Mercy is nothing else, but a sincere Intention to procure a Creature Good, so far only as Order will permit: Therefore, when a Creature has disturb'd this Order, God's Mercy pursues the Criminal, he offers him his Grace, and invites him a thousand Times to reestablish by Repentance, the Order he had broken by his Disobedience: And then, if he will not hearken to these kind Exhortations; Justice forces him to resettle it by Torments; for God, tho' he be Omnipotent cannot permit Disorder: He must either destroy it in Time, by forgiving Sins, or in Eternity, by punishing them. In fine, Sir, Mercy governs in this World, but its Commission extends not to the other; *there* Justice reigns alone, and either distributes Rewards or decerns Punishment. Much

good therefore may your *Dilemma* do you. *There is a God, and He is Merciful : There is a God, and He is Just.* If that be a Perfection, so is this, nor are they incompatible : For tho' one Vice may jarr with another. Vertues are of a more peaceable Complexion, they live in Union, and can lodge in the same Breast.

Theom. I don't deny, but that Offences against the divine Majesty may deserve some Punishment ; and I know that if there be a God, he has Power to chastize, as well as to reward ; but an Eternal Punishment is very lasting, and looks more like an Act of Tyranny, than Justice. I could allow well enough of a round Fit of the Gout, or Stone ; or let God punish my Crimes on my Cattel with Murraings, Plagues and Mortality, I am contented : But an Eternal Torment for one Escape of Nature, for one Sally of Passion, can only proceed from Excess of Cruelty.

Euseb. We should live under a most happy Government, were all our Judges of your soft Disposition ; what merry Days should we enjoy if Murthers were only Pillor'd ? Sodomies Whipt ? And Traytors confin'd to their Lodgings ? Such severe Laws, would no doubt disarm

arm Vice, discourage Villany, and put all Roguery out of Countenance. But Sir, tell me, would not such over-strain'd Mercy let loose the whole Kennel of Abominations? Would it not cut off all the Lines of Communication between Man and Man, and turn all into a Heap of Confusion? Would you not judge those more guilty who made such Laws, than those who broke 'em? I am sure you would call out for some Grains of Severity, and apply a more violent Remedy to cure the agonizing Government. Yet you are in an ill Humour, because God does not steer his Conduct by those condescending Methods you condemn; and if he did, you would as certainly arraign his Mercy, as now you impeach his Justice. In a Word, *Theomachus*, as I told you above, there is an infinite Distance between God and Man; therefore, the Malice of every Sin is as Divines hold, in some Sort infinite; therefore, it deserves a Punishment, in some Sort infinite. But it can be only infinite in Duration; therefore every mortal Sin deserves an Eternal Punishment. How then dare you fasten on God Cruelty and Barbarism, when he only proportions the Pain to the Offence. Sir, take

my Advice: 'Tis more secure for you to repent, than to complain; 'tis Madness to play with the supream Being, Ingratitude to treat ill the best of Friends, Frenzy to provoke the strongest Enemy.

Theom. If I carry God's Mercy too high, you stretch his Justice beyond all Proportion. What Equality can you discover between a momentary Offence, and a never ending Pain? Between a Malice that has some Bounds, and a Punishment that has none? Me thinks, at least an Age of Torments may expiate a Day of unlawful Pleasure: But to rack and torture a short liv'd Frailty, Eternally; is to strain Justice to the very Pitch of Cruelty.

Euseb. No doubt, Justice always proportions the Punishment to the Offence; but then, this Proportion cannot consist in an equal Duration of the Crime, and the Pain. I have known a Perjury that pass'd through a D——'s Teeth in a Moment, pillor'd a whole Hour: And I have seen the guilty *Patient* run the Gantlet from *Newgate* to *Tyburn*. Yet tho' the Punishment was of a longer Continuance, than the Oath; who complain'd of Cruelty, but those very Rascals that deserv'd
the

the Correction? Does not Justice sometimes take Criminals by the Ears: And make the Guilty compound for their Transgressions, with the Loss of these innocent Members, which seldom return to their owners: Fellons Murtherers and Traytors by the Law of Nations suffer Death, that is a Punishment in some kind Eternal: And if the Soul be mortal (as the Atheists contend) absolutely so; because it forces the Criminals into a State of Nothing, in which they must eternally remain. The Vote of Mankind runs therefore against your Notion of Equity; and the Atheists Idea of Justice is no more defensible, than his Practice. Nay, Sir, if any Crime against a Prince or the Common-wealth can justly deserve Death; one against God as justly deserves Hell eternally.

For as on the one Side the Grandeur, Majesty, and Perfections of God, surpass infinitely those of the greatest and most absolute Monarch that ever breath'd: So on the other, our Obligation to obey, respect and love this august Master, rises with his Greatness. Therefore an Offence against God, exceeds that against a Prince, at least *terminative* in the same Proportion, that the Perfections of the one excel the

Baseness of the other. Therefore as there can be no Comparison between the Offences, there must be none between the Punishments. Now let the Punishment of a Crime against God be never so great, if it be not eternal, there must of necessity be some Proportion between it and Death, the just Punishment of a Treason against the Person of a temporal Prince; Therefore no Punishment can equal an Offence against God unless it be eternal.

Theo. You suppose when we recreate Nature we erect a high Court of Justice and commission Judges to arraign him; this is a Theological Speculation. No, no; we are so far from questioning his Authority, or impeaching his Majesty; that we do not even think of him in our Debauches: We intend not to displease him; but to please our Appetites; to regale our Senses, and enjoy the Creature.

Euseb. This is an excellent Play for Thieves and Murderers; and (would it hold) the Government might shut up *Newgate*, and pull down the Gallows; for few Highwaymen think of her Majesty, or her Laws, while they Murder and take Purfes on the Road. Let us suppose one of those Gentlemen on the Ladder, haranguing thus the Spectators.

Good

Good People! I am brought to an untimely, and (what is worse) to a most shameful End, against all the Laws of Justice. I was brought to the Bar for Affronting her Majesty: The Jury has found me Guilty; and the Judge Condemn'd me. Now I protest, I never harbour'd an unbeseeming Thought of her Majesty. I have serv'd my Sovereign at the Expence of my Blood; and was always ready to maintain her just Rights and Prerogatives with my Life and Fortunes. I follow'd my Master to *Steenkerck*, and *Norwinde*, and lost some Flesh, and my Money in his Service: At my Return, I was put to my Shifts, and could meet with no Relief, but on the Highway: Here I providentially fell upon a present Supply: I trust up a Brace of Lawyers, and uncas'd a solitary *Parson*; but in all my Expeditions, I never dreamt of her Majesty: How then could I affront or offend her? What Relation is there between the Princess, and the Subject, that an Injury offer'd one, must rebound on the other? What think you? Would this Loyal Speech reverse the Sentence?

Theom. No: I think Mr. Sheriff would bid Jack-ketch do his Office.

Ensch.

Euseb. I am of your Opinion : But then has not this Knight of the Queen's Highway an Atheist's play ? He crys *not Guilty good People !* Because in the actual Transgression of the Queen's Laws, he never thought of her Majesty ; and you plead for Impunity ; because (whilst you outrag'd Nature) you never dreamt of God. Sir, God is absolute Monarch of the Universe : He owes his Title to Sovereignty, neither to Birth, nor Election : His Right is founded in his boundless Perfections. Those Laws of Nature you transgress without Scruple, or Remorse ; are of his making ; and to controul his Orders, is to affront his Person : So that though Sinners do not question his Authority ; at least they despise it : Now for a vile Worm to contend with, and dare so great, so awful a Majesty, is to overshoot Insolence it self.

Theom. Well ; God's Justice, together with Devils, Flames, Darknefs, and Despair, would discompose me, cou'd I perswade my self, my Soul wou'd revive my Body ; but alas, we enter into the World like Beasts ; and make as inglorious an *Exit* : Our Bodies fall into Dust ; and our Souls into Nothing : Twenty Years hence I shall be, what I was a Thousand

and Years ago ; a meer *non ens*, incapable either of Pain, or Pleasure.

Euseb. This Evasion chills my Blood. What, can't you defend your Cause without drawing upon Nature ? Nor prove you are no Fool, without confessing your self a Beast ? I could easily force you from this Retrenchment, by demonstrating the Immortality of the Soul ; but I leave this Enterprize to a more convenient Season. In the mean time, I only desire to know, whether you are sure, the Soul ends with the last Breath : Without certainty, you are just where you was ; expos'd to that miserable State, that expects Atheists, if there be a God. Tell me then, are you sure Mens Souls are Mortal ?

Theom. When I compare the Operations of Beasts with those of Men ; methinks, we stand on the same Level. Yet a Voice within, tells me, I am of a more noble Extraction ; and this soft Whisper pesters my Brain with Doubts ; and my Heart with Fears.

Euseb. Perchance therefore your Soul is Immortal : Perchance there is a God, a Hell, and a Heaven : Perchance Christianity is the only Saving Religion in the World. Now if these Things are real, (and for ought you know they are) what will

will become of Atheists, and Latitudinarians? How nicely will they have manag'd their Affairs; when they see themselves stript of all Title to Heaven? And find an eternal Habitation prepar'd in Hell? You see what Hazard you run; and therefore I must conclude, your Conduct is foolish, and mad to Frenzy; unless you can make good to *Evidence*, that if your Opinions prove true, you shall enjoy *some Good*, that counterpoises the eternal Loss of Heaven; nay, and the exorbitant Tortures of Hell: For to risque the *Main* without good Warrant and Caution, is Rashness, and even Fury beyond Extravagance. I have laid open the just Subject of your Fears; favour me with a full Prospect of your Hopes.

DIA-

D I A L O G U E VI.

The Advantage Atheists and Latitudinarians can expect if there be no God; and if all Religions are Saving, is not comparable to the Disadvantage they fear, if there be a God; and if one Religion alone be Saving.

Theom. **S**IR, you have assign'd me an easy Task; and I undertake it with Pleasure: You have drawn up a frightful Bill of our Losses, if *there be a God*; and if *one Religion only be Saving*: I will ballance it with another of our Gain, if we are in the Right; and then you'll confess our Affairs are in a better Posture than you imagine, and perchance than you wish; if we venture Much, we hope for More; the Harvest ballances our Labour and Expence. I know not through what Prospective you view the Pleasures of Life: Methinks, they present us a fine Prospect; and in spite of the most severe Philosophy, dart forth too melting Charms to be contemptible. No doubt
Life

Life is a great Blessing; 'tis above Purchase, and cannot be Over-rated; but then Pleasure alone raises its Value: Devest it of pleasing Sensations, and 'twill become a Burthen. Were I sure never to be pleas'd, I should unwish my self, and Bribe some *Bravo* to dispatch me: I should fall out with my *Existence*, and Long to return to my *Quondam Nothing*. How valuable then is Pleasure, that can set so vast a Price on so mean a Thing? And give it the first Place in our Wishes; that would take up the last in our Desires? I know ill natur'd Philosophers, and visionary Divines, have imploy'd their Rhetorick to run down Pleasure, and to talk it out of Countenance. They have Libell'd it these Thousand Years, and attack'd it with Auxiliaries drawn from Doggerel and Invektive: Yet it stands its Ground, and maintains its Post with Reputation. Time, that lays open the Defects of other Things, has (it seems) discover'd some Perfections in Pleasure; for 'tis now courted more than ever: And this fair *Hellen* has more Gallants than that of *Greece*: It grows not cheap under Tryal; but rises under Use, and Experiment; it neither gluts, nor surfeits; its Beauty is always in the Flower;

Flower ; and out of the Reach of Age. Cities have chang'd Places ; Empires have sunk under the Weight of their own Greatness ; new Customs have worn out the Memory of the old : But the Desire of Pleasure has never vary'd : This runs in all our Veins : We took it from our Fathers ; and bequeath it to our Children ; 'tis the prime End of Nature ; and almost the sole Object of Inclination. Now it seems strange that all Men should dote of Deformity ; and run into the Embracements of Nothing ; that they should prize above all Things, what is below Price ; and so turn Fools or Madmen for Company. You will perchance tell me, that I am mistaken in my Calculation ; and marshal up a *Brigade* of Anchorites, to confute my Arithmetick. These Men (you'll say) made War upon Pleasure. They fasted and disciplin'd themselves into a Loathing of it ; and sometimes mur'd up a Sense to fortify the Avenues against so vile, and so treacherous an Enemy. These Men therefore, who thus persecuted Pleasure, were neither fond of its Charms, nor well convinc'd of its Excellence.

But

But according to the Proverb, *One Swallow makes not a Summer*; your rare Example of Abstinence, and Mortification cannot weaken my universal Induction: They leave it in its entire Force; nay, they strengthen it; for you gaze on such Men as Miracles; and propose them to the World, rather to be admir'd, than imitated: Nay, they pursu'd Pleasure whilst they renounc'd it; and so only shov'd it away with one Hand, and drew it to them with the other: For as there is oftentimes a secret Pride even in Humility; so there is a Pleasure in Self-denial; and all that you can prove by these Examples is, that Men's Palates have different Contextures; and what tickles gently some, grates upon others: In a word, to question the Goodness of Pleasure, is to deny Experiment; and contradict Demonstration.

Thus Sir, you see if Atheists hazard Something, they hope for More: Pleasure, Satisfaction, and a most happy Life, ballance all those Miseries which may befall us after Death. For my part, I cannot think, that the fondest Imagination can over-flourish, or even Paint to the Life, the Happiness of those

those who never check Nature, but give her the Reins, and follow blindly her Directions. They can regale Ambition, feast Revenge, and treat Sensuality with Splendour: These odd Notions of Good and Evil, fume into the Head, they raise Damps on the Conscience, and dash Delights with Gall and Wormwood. If we must pen up our Appetites, and confine 'em to Limits; adieu Content. For in Reality, we properly enjoy Nothing, when we refuse our Passions any Thing. But when we follow the Bent of Nature, and swim down the Current of Inclination, 'tis then we possess a Bliss equal to your so much talk'd of Heaven. But with this onely Difference, that it wants Immortality. Now *Eusebius*, where is your Folly? If our Opinions are false, 'tis sure we shall be undone hereafter: But then if they prove true; our Happiness will be greater than our Misery can be, tho' they prove false: For if we side with the Belief of a God, and of Christian Religion, and live up to the Rigour of those Beliefs; we discard our selves of all the Pleasures of Life; nay, and turn it into a Torture. Now Miseries in the Hand, pinches more than Miseries in Reversion.

Eudox.

Eudox. *Theomachus* you have forgot the topping Branch of our Priviledge : If we beleive a God, and the Mysteries of Christianity, we must enslave Reason, and regulate our Opinions by the Rules of Revelation. We must both shackle and hoodwink our Understandings, and stretch 'em on the Rack, to force 'em to deny first Principles. But when we act by our Maxims we breath a more open, and free Air : We can tofs our Assent from one side of the Contradiction to the other : And beleive to Day what we shall disbeleive to Morrow. Now this intellectual Freedome is of a finer Nature, than any Pleasure of the Sense ; 'tis an Appendix of Beatitude and a Prerogative of the Diety. Add this *Eusebius*, to what *Theomachus* has already produc'd ; and you will have little Reason to lay at our Door Folly and Rashness.

Euseb. I cannot well determine *Theomachus*, whether your Speech deserves an Answer, or Indignation. Such daring Impieties surprise me. The Practice of Lewdness, and Sensuality is both shameful, and scandalous. But to turn Advocate for Brutality : To canonize Debaucheries ; and Idolize Murders, Thefts and Adulteries, is to throw down the
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Inclosures that seperate Men from Beasts;
to clap Reason in the Dungeon and
Sense on the Throne.

Had Bulls, Boars and Goats the Power to harangue in our Days, as in those of *Aesop*; they would have display'd their Rhetorick on the same Subject; but, I doubt, whether they would have screw'd it up to your Pitch of Excellency. No, no; they would not have had Wit enough to crow'd so many Follies, Blasphemies and Impieties, in so small a Compass; nor Impudence to flourish on Lewdness in the Presence of Men.

So long as we keep within the Bounds of Moderation and Law: Pleasure may be tolerated, yet let unlawful Desires appear never so charming, they are certainly contemptible, because unwarrantable, and he who buys a Satisfaction (tho' never so glittering) at the Expence of Duty, is sure to over purchase: The outward Appearance of Things cannot be the true Standard of their Value. Tinsel glitters no less than Gold, and a false Guinea often shines more than a true one. We must wash off the *Fucus*, before we can frame a right Judgment, or distinguish sterling from counterfeit Coyn. Pleasures affect the Organ well enough, but then they grate
upon

upon Reason; they always give us a troublesome Farewel, and make Room for Repentance. I am confident, Sir, that the Ghosts of your past Delights have sometimes disorder'd you more, than the living Pleasures diverted you, and you have wish'd undone in a Calm, what you did in a violent Transport of Passion.

A Man (as you say) who was sure never to be pleas'd, would have no great Reason to be over-fond of his Being. For Pain and Suffering without any Relation to another World are very troublesome Advantages; but then, who can be pleas'd with nothing but Riot and Luxury, deserves no Existence: He is a Shame to Nature, and a perfect Scandal to his Kind.

You would fain draw a Proof for the Excellence of Pleasure from the Multitude of its Abettors. But you do not consider, that you have chosen an untoward *Medium*: For Judgments are not to be fram'd by Practice, but Reason. The Generality, you know, stick in the Surface of Things, and are ten Times more bigotted with Appearance than Reality. Ask the high flown Debauchees, and they will confess their Judgments jarr with
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with their Conduct ; they even condemn Wickedness, whilst they pursue it.

But Pleasure never gluts, never surfits.
Why then are you always on the Change? Why do you feast your Passions with new Ragousts, but to whet your Appetite with Variety ? And to entertain it with Fresh Appearances ?

To say we are as eager in the Pursuit of Pleasure as our Forefathers were, proves only we carry about us the same Corruption that our Nature bends to ill, as theirs did : And that we are all Children of the same rebellious Parent. Their Judgments varied from their Practice, and so do ours. They sought out Vaults to shade their Impieties, and buried their Abominations in Darknes and Privacy : And this is a shroud Argument, that they did not esteem much these Things they blusht at.

Believe it Sir, I am able to bring more than *Divines* and *Anchorets*, who have lash'd unlawful Pleasures, and burlesqu'd 'em. I could produce some of your own Tribe and Discipline, who deserve Credit, because they speak upon Experience. I took a Turn the other Day to the *King's-Bench* to visit a Friend. I found him in the Company of some other Gentlemen,

tllemen, who had taken up their Lodgings in that melancholy Retirement. Discontent sat on their Faces; every Posture mark'd Impatience, and every Word both Repentance and Dispair: They had out-liv'd their Estates; and (what was worse) all hopes of regaining 'em: I pitty'd their Misfortune; but when I understood they had Ruffled 'em for *Wine*, and barter'd 'em for *Misses*; my Pitty turn'd almost into Indignation: I thought with my self they deserv'd no Estate, who knew so ill to manage one; but at least, (said I with a Smile) you have had Pleasures for your Money; and you feel even now this Satisfaction, that once you were happy. Quite contrary, (said they) our former Felicity presses harder upon us than our present Misery: And then they run out into such *Investives* against criminal Pleasure, and rated Debauchery, with such a *Pathos* and *Energy*, that I easily saw they spoke from the Heart, and declaim'd in earnest.

I believe those Gentlemen who lie under the Surgeon's Hands; who are ty'd up to Fasting, and *Mercury*, and drivil out in a Stove the Relicks of your incomparable Pleasures, are much of the Coop'd
up

up Squire's Mind. For tho' the Vintners and Harlots have not invaded their Purfs, nor Luxury like a Whirl-pool swallow'd their Lands, yet Diseases have over-set Health, and almost sunk their Bodies into the Grave. But I have follow'd you too far, 'tis Time to leave you ; only I will add, that I cannot esteem that Great, which makes me Less, and tumbles me below my Level. Reason is a Prerogative, no Naufance ; and I am not dispos'd to Mortgage it for a *Miss*, or *Claret*.

For all your boasting, I fear *Atheism* cannot suppress those odd *Notions of Good and Evil* ; they alarm your Fears, awake your Conscience ; and sprinkle your Delights with the unpalatable Ingredient of Pitch and Sulphur ; but if they do not ; it only follows that your Understanding is drown'd in Sensuality ; that your Wit is sunk into Frenzy ; and so that you are stark mad with your *Mahometical* Happiness.

I confess *Eudoxus*, that the Pleasure of the Mind has some Value ; it appears better shap'd than that of Sense ; it shines brighter ; it's longer liv'd ; and besides has Nothing of Mistiness, or Brutality : But then I cannot conceive,

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why

why this Satisfaction must be solely Ingross'd by Atheists, and Latitudinarians: You say we must enslave our Understanding when we embrace Christianity, and regulate our Judgments by Divine Revelation: But, pray, is this such an Outrage to Reason? Does not God know perfectly all Things.

Eudox. He does.

Euseb. Does not his Revelation agree with his Knowledge?

Eudox. It does; for certainly he cannot tell a Lye.

Euseb. Now : God never Commands us to believe any Mystery, unless it be evidently credible he has Reveal'd it; from whence it follows, that Christians are so far from hoodwinking, or forcing Reason, that Men cannot act more rationally; for thus they proceed. *Whatever God Reveals is True: But God has Reveal'd the Mystery of the Trinity: Therefore it is True.* The first Proposition is evident: The second is evidently credible: For till the Revelation appear evidently credible, no Christian lies under any Obligation of believing; and when it comes up to such an Evidence, no Man can disbelieve it, without Imprudence. 'Tis true: The Mystery re-
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main in Darkneſs, and Obſcurity ; tho' I believe that God is *One*, and *Three* ; yet I am ignorant of the Manner ; nor am I oblig'd to know it : God has left that as a Subject of Diſpute, to exerciſe our Wits ; not our Faith.

Gentlemen, you ſee when Accounts are adjusted, you are not ſo much before hand with the World, as you imagined ; but to favour you more than I am oblig'd ; let it be granted, that Pleaſures are ten times more valuable than you pretend ; at leaſt they cannot out-laſt Time ; they move towards their Period ; and can accompany you no farther than the Grave ; when once you are lain on that cold Bed, Pleaſures take Wing, and diſappear ; your Body is made over to the Worms ; and (if there be a God) your Soul will be deliver'd into the Hands of unmerciful Devils. Sir, tell me, would you accept of the Empire of the Univerſe, together with all the beaſtial Paſtimes of *Sardanapalus*, or *Heliogabalus*, if you were ſure afterwards to be ſtretch'd on Racks, to live on Stench, and to be regal'd with Toads and Vipers for the Space of Twenty Years ?

100 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

Theo. No surely.

Euseb. Yet every Atheist, or Latitudinarian, cannot hope for Crowns or Scepters ; they cannot gratify their Sensuality with so high-season'd Lewdness, as those two wretched Princes ; notwithstanding (if there be a God) they must buy their minute Satisfaction, neither with Tortures, nor Toads, nor the Torments of Twenty Years ; but of Eternity : If therefore you will not purchase a temporal Enjoyment with a temporal Punishment ; why will you buy a temporal, and fleeting Satisfaction, with a Punishment that is Eternal ?

Theo. Pain is a very lively Perception ; it flashes upon the Organ with a vast Impetuosity ; and puts our whole Machine in Disorder ; 'tis stronger than Pleasure, and keeps it at a Distance, when we have it not ; and turns it away when we have it : Hence I would not take Twenty Years of Satisfaction, with a sure Reversion of Twenty Years of Pain ; for this will certainly more afflict Nature, than that can please it : But the Pains of Hell, and Pleasures of Heaven, are wholly uncertain ; and these of Atheists assur'd ; so that tho' those
Pains

Pains compar'd precisely with the Pleasures, are infinitely greater; yet if you consider those in a State of Uncertainty; and these in a State of Certainty; we must give these the Precedence; and this is conformable to that capital Maxim; *Keep what is Certain; and leave what is Uncertain.* Give me leave to frame this short Syllogism: 'Tis imprudence to part with what is Certain, for what is Uncertain; but the Pleasures of Heaven, and Pains of Hell are Uncertain; and those of this World are Certain; therefore 'tis imprudence to quit the Pleasures of this Life out of Fear of falling into Hell, or out of Hope of flying into Heaven.

Euseb. The Force of your Discourse is wound up in your Maxim, and the Syllogism is but a meer Deduction; so that if your Foundation be weak, the Superstructure falls to the Ground: Now, Sir, I must tell you; your grand Principle is not Universally true; and by Consequence unfit for the Post you have put it in; unless it be restrain'd, and us'd with Discretion, it proves nothing but Sophistry.

For, does not the Husbandman cultivate and manure his Ground at the certain Expence of both his Ease and Money? Yet his Gain is as uncertain as the Winds and Seasons. Another takes up at the Temple; he sinks his Purse, and heats his Brain with plodding over *Cook* and *Littleton*; he pores Night and Day upon the *Code*, and confounds himself with the *Institutions* and *Pandeets*, and hopes to beat a Fortune out of his Labour and Expences; yet tho' he certainly lays out his Money, and sacrifices his Repose; he is not certain to reach his Pretensions; his Expectation may be baulk'd; and after Twenty Years, he may be no farther advanc'd in the World, than he was the first Day he set out.

Our Merchants put to Sea with a good *Cargo*; they pursue Profit into the *Indies*; the Danger of their Persons is certain; they expose their Commodities to all the Casualties of Wind and Weather, that lay before very safe in Magazines; the Gain is ill assur'd: Do not then these Men confute your Maxims by Practice? And who ever indicted 'em of Imprudence? Or tax'd 'em of Folly?

In fine Sir, the whole Commerce of Life rould upon this Principle; that oftentimes 'tis the Part of a Prudent Man to quit what is certain, for what is uncertain; and were it otherwise, there would be so little Business in the World, that Mankind might sit cross arm'd, or fall together by the Ears to avoid Idleness: Mens understandings would grow downward, their Courages would shrink up; Industry would turn off in Lethargy; and the whole World would fall back into its primitive Ignorance.

Theo. I know the Principle comprehends a Latitude and is not true without Restriction.

Euseb. A little Patience if you please; when I have convicted it of Error, you shall have Time to argue, why Sentence should not pass upon it. When the Good we hope is equal or inconsiderably greater, than what we hazard; it would be a Piece of the highest Extravagance, to expose what we possess in Peace and Quiet, for that which is only equal or inconsiderably greater; and withal very uncertain: If by the Loss of the certain we chance to procure the uncertain, we are but just where we were; but if we fail in our Pursuit, we shall not only fall

short of what we hop'd for, but even of what we possessed: In this Case your Axiom may be allow'd of; but then it supports not your Cause; For there is no Proportion between the most lussious Pleasures of Life, which you suppose certain; and those of Heaven you suppose uncertain; for those are built on the tottering Foundation of Time; and in spite of Care, within the Space of some Years, much touch their fatal Period, and flash into Nothing; whereas these are infinitely better qualified, they stand on a stable Bottom; they never wither, never die: So that tho' we consider the Joys of Heaven in a State of Uncertainty; And those of Time in a State of Certainty; those must prevail; because the exorbitant Greatness of the Divine Joys of Heaven accompanied with an eternal Duration, are more advantageous than all the trifling Satisfactions of Sense, tho' stamp'd with the charming Attractives of Certainty and Possession.

For would any Man (who had one Grain of Prudence) accuse me of Folly or Rashness; if I should venture a Penny upon a well-grounded Presumption of gaining a Million? Would not you and all the Merchants in the Nation, share in

in the Venture? Yet in this Case we should quit the Certain for the Uncertain. Now, *if there be a God, if the Christian Religion be the only Saving Communion in the World*; and you live up to the Precepts of Reason and the Gospel; after this Life you will enter upon the Possession, of a Bliss that surpasses all the brutish and fond Enjoyments of Sense, more than a Million exceeds a Penny; for between these two Sums there is some Proportion, but all the Geometricians in Europe can never find a *Medium Proportionale*, between what is Temporal and Eternal.

Indeed, if you should square your Conduct by the severe Rules of Christian Morality, and afterwards find no God to recompence your Vertue; or that you might have purchas'd an equal Glory, following the more condescending Precepts of other Religions; you would be at some Loss: *i. e.* You would have debarr'd your self of some lewd Sensations to little Purpose; but this Disappointment cannot be put in the Scale, against those vast Treasures you might pretend to, if there were a God, and if only one Religion were Saving: If therefore, he who should refuse to hazard a Penny

on a most prudent Expectation of gaining a Million, would in the Opinion of all Mankind, commit a Folly almost too extravagant for *Bedlam* it self? Why shall we fear to brand Atheists and Latitudinarians with Frenzy and Madness, who prefer a pauntry Content before a Pleasure that is Eternal. Your grand Principle *leave not the the Certain for the Uncertain*, cannot relieve you, because it has no Place in the present Dispute; for there is no Proportion between the Happiness of the other World, which you suppose Uncertain, and the Pleasure of this, you suppose Certain; for no Arithmetick is able to multiply Moments into Eternity. Now I answer your Syllogism.

'Tis imprudence to part with what is certain, for what is uncertain; but the pleasures of Heaven are uncertain, and those of Life are certain; therefore 'tis imprudence to quit the pleasures of this Life for those of Heaven.

I distinguish the first Proposition; *'Tis imprudent to part with what is certain, for what is uncertain: If what is uncertain be considerably greater than what is certain; I deny it: If it be only equal, or inconsiderably greater; I grant it: I transmit the second Proposition; and deny*

deny the Consequence: Pray take Notice I do not grant the second Proposition; for the first Part is only true in our present Supposition; and the second is absolutely false; for those Pleasures you so much talk of, are as uncertain as any Thing can be; so that tho' your famous Axiom were never so true, 'tis impertinent to the present Dispute; seeing your Gain is as doubtful as your Loss.

Theo. What, will you maintain our Pleasures are uncertain? If you can make that out; I confess Affairs are in a worse Posture than I fancy'd.

Euseb. I will maintain it; and demonstrate it too. Your pleasures, Sir, consists in the Satisfaction of Sense: Now all such Satisfaction is very expensive: *Burgundy*, and *Champaigne* Wines grow not at *London*; they must pass the Seas; and before they are fit for an Atheists Palate, the Price runs high: you must give the Vintner leave to rate 'em at Pleasure; and thank him for his Favour, if he gives you a Bottle for an *Angel*. Ragouts are as costly: Cooks will not toil for 'em, unless they be well paid; they value their Sweat as high as the Vintner does his *Champaigne*;
and

and you can rely no more on the Conscience of the one, than of the other; for neither is strait-lac'd, and you must stand to their Mercy: If you cast up your Accounts, you will find the Taverns and Treating-Houses have eas'd you of a round Income. *Misses* are farm'd at a higher Rate; like the Monster *Bebemet*, they drink whole Rivers; they swallow Mines, and devour *Lordships*: You may Rig out a First-Rate Ship, at less Expence than a Lady of Pleasure: She must appear at *Hide-Park* with a glittering Equipage; and shroud the Scandal of her Life under a Veil of Embroidery: And what is worse, she presently falls to decay, and than the Bills of Reparation swell higher than those of the very Building: Now if you let her lie out of Repair, you either tempt her Fidelity, or her ill Nature; and then your Heaven may chance to sink into Hell: For if you resolve with Eagerness a Relief; you send her a Blank, and encourage her *Ladyship* to draw up Conditions at pleasure; and to rise upon you at the Discretion of Avarice: You see these Pleasures are expensive, and require a good Fund: Now, Sir, are all Atheists sure of good Estates?

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Have they found out the Philosophers Stone? Or have they *Midas's* Faculty, of turning whatever they touch into Gold? I cannot think that *Mannours* follow Religion; or that a beggarly Christian can start up a Money'd *Atheist*: Pleasures therefore are not over sure to every *Atheistical Profelyte*; unless you only admit *Lords* and *Gentlemen* into your Communion; and so compose your Church, as the *Venetians* do their *Grand Senate* of Nobles: But even in this case, your happy Life wants good Security: *Estates* like *Eeles* often give us the Slip; and I have known some who began the World with Three Thousand Pound *per Annum*, end in an Hospital: Some forfeit their Fund for Loyalty; others for Rebellion: Some Drink it away; others Dice it: Some wear it out by husbanding it too well, and others by managing too ill: The very Foundation therefore of your Pleasures being so precarious, and uncertain, the Pleasures themselves can't be assur'd.

Secondly, Without Health the most exquisite Pleasures are dull and insipid; they rather importune, than please; and put our Patience to the Tryal, rather than divert our Senses: The Harmony
of

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of a Lute, tho' touch'd by an *Orpheus*, will grate the Ear, if the Head be out of Tune ; and a discompos'd Stomach receives the most delicious Ragouts with Reluctancy, and Convulsions : A Fit of the *Cholick* makes a Crown uneasy, and turns all the Charms of Empire into Dissatisfaction. Now our Body is a Compound of Contraries, each Part clashes with its Fellow, and like the *Madianites*, draws upon its next Companion ; Heat plays upon Cold ; Dryness upon Humidity : Whilst Victory is at a stand, our Pulse beats even ; but when it leans to one Side, 'tis Time to call for a Doctor : Besides these Hostilities are acted out of Light, or like *Miners* skirmish under Ground ; and so we cannot send Relief to ballance the Advantage which one may gain over the other : In fine, Sir, Health consists in an equal Temper of capricious Humours ; In a good Intelligence of a thousand Veins, and Arteries ; and what can be more uncertain ? I never meditate on the Frame and Machinism of Bodies ; but I am rapt into Extasies of Admiration ; and wonder more we are one Day in Health, than that we should continually groan under the Pangs of the most acute Diseases :

feases: And if all Men's Health is uncertain, the Atheist's is much more; for their excessive Irregularities both hasten Infirmities, and inflame them; Debauchery revenges its own Excesses upon our Bodies, and plunges them into a State of Langour and Weakness: Health must jade; it cannot hold out, if we Live to fast, and are continually upon the Gallop: And thus you make what is uncertain, more uncertain; if you do not manage your Constitution, but prostitute it; you throw it away before you have done Living; nay, when it is most useful to your Design; and so betray your Senses, and conspire against the interest of Ease and Pleasure.

3dly, Life is the Foundation of all Happiness; on this all our Hopes and Expectation of worldly Pleasures are built: Yet this is a Thousand Degrees more uncertain, than the *Existence of a God*: We know no more, when we came into the World, than the child unborn; and know no more when we shall leave it: Our Stay depends on a Hundred Circumstances; and our Removal on as many Accidents, we are neither able to avoid, nor foresee: An Enemy may
Ponyard

Ponyard us into the other World ; a Friend may Carefs us thither ; Grief finks us into the Grave, and Joy overfets us : Nay, the Scratch of a Pin oftentimes baffles the Vertue of Drugs, and the Art of the Surgeon. The Future is to come ; the Past is flown away ; and neither at our Difpofal ; fo that we are only Mafters of the Prefent : Now Money, Health, and Life it felf, being fo uncertain, fo precarious ; how can you perfwade your felf, that Pleafure your *summum bonum* is affur'd ? But if this be uncertain, Atheifts, and Latitudinarians are mad to Extravagance ; for then they chufe a Pack of brutifh, fhort-liv'd, and uncertain Pleafures, before thofe eternal Joys of the other World, that are exceffively beyond Thought, and long beyond Imagination : Now if a Man would act foolifhly, who fhould chufe a Crown that is uncertain, before a Million that is equally uncertain ; with what Terms can I exprefs your Frenzy ; who rather lay hold on a thin, paultry, uncertain Pleafure, than a Happinefs that is uncertain indeed, but withall Eternal ; efppecially when you not only quit all Right to this exorbitant Happinefs, but
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at the same Time run up to the very Brink of Damnation; for those who reject Heaven *ipso Facto* accept of Hell. We have waded deep enough into this Matter. I will now draw up a short Scheme of the whole Discourse, and then leave it to your Consideration.

To shew the Unreasonableness of Atheism and Latitudinarianism, I have condescended to more than you durst ask, either in Justice, or Equity: *viz.* That the Existence of a God is doubtful; as well as the Necessity of professing the Christian Religion for Salvation: Before you can pretend to evidence, you must turn common Sense topsy-turvy, and fly in the Face of Reason: I have stooped so low as to grant these two Points doubtful, to display the Weakness of your Pretensions, and to demonstrate, that Curtesie it self is not able to justify your Conduct.

I ground my Discourse on this Principle; when two Opinions both doubtful, both uncertain, do concur; 'tis a Folly to choose that which will ruin me, if false; and cannot turn to my Advantage tho' true: You have subscrib'd; and indeed all Nature has put its Hand to the Principle: Now, Gentlemen, if the
Opini-

Opinions you embrace, prove false, you will be eternally cast out of that happy Region of the Blessed, and eternally confin'd to the Pitch and Sulphur of the Reprobate: Is it possible for a wretched Creature to loose more on the ~~one~~ Side, or to suffer more on the other? Can any Man be more unhappy than to be banish'd from his Sovereign Happiness? or more miserable than to be ingulph't into a State of Eternal Sufferings? Is not he undone, who has turn'd Bankrupt not only of his Fortune, but even of his Hope? and has nothing left but Torments, Rage, and Despair? If your Opinions chance to be true, what Advantage can you reap but petty Satisfaction of Sense? Which rather surfeit than satisfy; and stupify more than they delight? They look big only at a Distance, and *nothing* when they draw near; they are indeed Giants in our Fancy, and Pigmies in themselves: Yet you choose these contemptible Pleasures, that avail you little while you live, and nothing when you come to die; you leave those which last eternally: Now has not such a Choice all Characters of Folly.

Pray Gentlemen set some Moments aside for Reflection: The Business is of Weight, and deserves sober Thoughts.
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Had you two Souls, you might send one into the next World to discover, how Things go in that unknown Region; and if that should perish in the Enterprize, you would have at least another in Reserve: But alas, you have but one; and if that miscarry, you are lost for ever: The first Moment that lays open your Misfortune, discovers the Impossibility of retrieving it.

Theom. Come *Eusebius*, we have almost drain'd the Subject; let us change our Theam. You have arraign'd my Choice; and in your Fancy convicted it of Folly and Extravagance: I impeach you of the same Misdemeanours: Pray let us see if you can plead your own Cause with as much Art, as you have against mine.

D I A L O G U E V.

Tho' there be no God, and tho' the Christian Religion be not the only saving Religion, 'tis Prudence to believe there is a God, and that the Christian Religion is the only saving Religion in the World; and to live up to the Tenets of both.

Euseb. **Y**OU have assign'd me an easy Province: The very opening of our Cause is sufficient to gain it. That we may not beat the Air, and shoot at Rovers; let us look back upon the old Principle, *When two uncertain Propositions lie before me; I am oblig'd by all the Laws of Prudence to choose that, which will turn to my Advantage if true, and cannot prejudice me, if it be false;* I have establish'd this Maxim above, and I see not how you can offer against it any Thing of Moment.

Theom. Go on.

Euseb. If our Opinions are true; When once we shake off these Clouds of Clay,
these

these Mists of Dust and Alhes, which interpose between us and Eternity; we shall be in a most comfortable Condition; for the very Moment that deprives us of Life, will repair all the Decays of Nature, all the Ruins of Time; we shall enter upon a State of Bliss, with a Spring that ever flourishes, ever blooms; upon a State inaccessible to Infirmities, unknown to Miseries, above the stroke of Fortune, and out of the Jurisdiction of Death: Now to pass on a sudden from Fear to Assurance, from Sickness to Health, from Poverty to Plenty, and from Death to Life; must be a very entertaining Change: But what is this, to that Ocean of Bliss, that flows from the Face of God? One Ray struck *Moses* almost blind; his Mortality sunk under so glorious an Appearance, and Nature was too weak to bear the splendour of the Object, or to continue the Correspondence. The Fondness of Imagination always magnifies Temporal Pleasures; Fancy over-flourishes the Object, and paints beyond the Life; they are more gaudy in our Brain, than in themselves, and the Expectation of 'em out-weighs Possession: But the Pleasures of the other World, are above Expression,

sion, and Imagination too; nor can we take their Dimensions by what they are, but by what they are not: All that I can say, is, they put an End to Fear, a Term to Hope, and a Stop to Desire; and certainly that Creature has touch'd upon the true Point of Happiness, that neither wishes to be Greater, nor fears to be Less.

Theo. Well, well, Sir, you will indeed be very well provided, if there be a God; but suppose there be none; you will confess then that you have underrated all the Pleasures of this Life, and sold 'em for a Dream.

Euseb. Sold 'em for a Dream say you? You lie under a great Mistake; tho' there are no such Things, as God, or Heaven, I sell 'em to Advantage, and make the most of 'em: The bare Probability of a happy Eternity, has more Worth, than a certain Possession of all the Advantages of Life: These Toys end in Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit; we mispend our Thoughts, we render our selves cheap, and despicable, by throwing away our Inclinations upon these Amusements: But I told you before, that those Pleasures you talk of, are as uncertain as the Joys of Heaven;

ven; and in this Case, I only truck one Uncertainty for another: But then what I give, is only Temporal, and what I take, Eternal: Now if there be a God, my Fortune is made for ever; if there be no God, I receive small Disadvantage; I only discard my self of those Things that are noxious to my Body, and scandalous to my Nature: At least I live like a Man; though in the End I dye like a Brute, and fall into Nothing: But do you think Christians and Atheists must forswear all Pleasure? That they must torture their Senses? And only know they Live by Mortification and Torture.

Theom. They must check Passion, arest Appetite, and curb the very Tendency of Nature to Pleasure; they must continually stand upon their Guard, and scour about for fear of a Surprise: Now these Employments are laborious, and mortifying; a Man that is thus upon the Hoof, can scarce find Leaseure for Diversion: In short, who lives up to the Principles of your Belief, must divorce from Mirth, disband from Company, and like Toads feed on the poyson of Spleen and Melancholy.

Euseb.

Euseb. We must indeed have a watchful Eye over our Passions, and keep 'em within the Bounds of Reason; we must not step over the Limits of Decency, nor exceed the Prescript of Moderation; yet we have a large Field to play in: Those Restraints are laid upon us; because an universal Liberty would undo us; and indeed I find few Actions prohibited besides those, that either debauch Health, cross upon Reason, or undermine Society: Now, who cannot be pleas'd, unless he prepares Work for the *Doctor*, unless he revels away his Wits, or unhinges the whole Frame of Commerce, and Conversation, deserves like Lyons or Bears to be hunted out of Society.

A Christian may pretend to some Enjoyment in this World, without forfeiting his Claim to the Delights of the other; if Providence has furnish'd him with an Estate, he may both keep it, and use it too; nay he may take those Measures which Prudence, and Justice shall suggest, to improve it; he may aspire handsomely to an honourable Post, and clap on his Coach a *Coronet*, if he can procure a Patent; he may eat wholesome Food, and Drink good Wine; so he

he does not clog his Stomach, nor offend his Brain: Indeed he must beware of Excess, and this, methinks, is no great Encroachment on his Freedom, no great Confinement to his Diversion; for certainly a Surfeit is not very entertaining; and a fit of Drunkenness is no charming Trance to any but to the Spectators: If a Christian racks his Brain, shrinks his Purse, or weakens his Body with amorous Intreagues, he passes his Commission: But then he has the Freedom to marry; and what will be the Difference between him, and an Atheist; but that this dotes on a Mistress, and the other places his Affections on a Wife; that the one satisfies Sense at the expence of Duty; and the other joyns Duty with Pleasure: So that upon the whole, unless Sin be the only charming Circumstance, and that nothing can gratifie Sense, unless it invades our Innocence, your Advantage over us is inconsiderable: But then, we have other Advantages that ballance this; our Pleasures are clean, untainted, and (what is more valuable) innocent; we enjoy 'em without Scruple, without Remorse, because without Offence; they are neither mixt with Fear, nor Shame;

nor are they follow'd by Repentance; they bare the Test of Conscience, and dare stand a Tryal at God's Tribunal.

Theo. If this be all, we stand on equal Ground: My Conscience enjoys a continual Calm; it sleeps as soundly as if it had taken an Opiate, and always comes to the Lure of my Desires.

Euseb. You are slipt into a Fit of bantering sure; a quiet Conscience to an Atheist is very extraordinary: No, no; Sir, in Spite of Debauchery and Infidelity too, it will struggle, it will turn upon you, when it finds you alone, and fly in your Face: A Dose of Claret may lay it a sleep, the Noise of Company, and the Tumults of Passion may drown its Voice, or put a stop to its Clamours; but when the Fumes are settled; when the Company withdraws and Passion runs in its own Channel; it reads you unpleasant Lectures of Shame and Horror; it opens a full Prospect of Hell, it enlivens Fear, it calls upon Despair, and conjures up a Battallion of Fiends to haunt you. Tell me *Theomachus*, when the Candel is extinguish'd, and Sleep flies from your Eyes; when the Fire of Wine has boyl'd up your Blood into a small Fever; are you not plagu'd with Doubts,
and

and hagg'd with Apprehensions? Does not, *what if there be a God*, ring a dismal Knell in your Ears? And toils the Disease from your Head to your Heart? Would you not purchase an Assurance, that there is no God; no Reckoning with a Lordship?

Theo. Such Thoughts sometimes hover about me; but they spring from Custom and Education. I was brought up a Christian and imbued with all the Principles of that Perswasion; I suck'd in from the Cradle those frightful Notions of Judgment and Hell; and Time has not been able to wear out those dismal Ideas: The first Tincture sticks close, and the Errors of Youth are seldom forgotten: But others who have had the good Fortune to meet with a more free Education, laugh at the Apparitions of those childish Bug-Bears, first created by Nurses, and then kept up by Fancy.

Euseb. These dreadful Spectres neither owe their Being to Education, Nurses nor Fancy; they are very real Things: Nature has stamp'd the Belief of 'em in our Soul, nor is Atheism able to deface them: These Sparks who have not lain under their Discipline; who have rang'd about the Island from their Youth, like

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the

the Barbarous *Brasilians* in the Wilderness of *America*; or wild Asses on the Mountains, without Restraint, without Instruction; may hector Conscience, but cannot gag it: In spite of Debauchery it will sometimes upbraid, it will throw Crimes before their Faces, and muster up all the Forces of Guilt and Punishment to torment 'em.

Tell an Atheist, you have a Demonstration against the Being of a God; the bare Proposal quickens him; it pours into him a new Supply of Vigour and Activity; it sweetens his Nature and throws off the misty Vapours of Spleen, and Melancholy: Pray why such Joy at the very Apprehension of no God? Is it so welcome News to hear that he must drop into Nothing? And take Leave of Existence when he bids adieu to Life? No certainly: But Atheists know, if there be a God, they must once appear at his Tribunal, and they have no Inclination to put the Issue of their Cause upon the Justice of his Sentence: Now, why should they fear to be condemn'd, unless they know they have done ill? And how can they dread Punishment without trembling at the Crime? Who live up to the Precepts of Christianity fear no future Evil,

Evil, because they act none here; they apprehend no Punishment, because they deserve none. Such a Security is above Price; it exceeds the sparkling Diadems of the *Cæsars* and all the brutish Pleasures of the Atheists; 'Tis above the Value of Gold or Diamonds, and can only be purchas'd by Vertue.

Besides, tho' we cast the other World out of the Question: Chastity, Modesty, and Temperance are honorable Qualifications; they draw Esteem, Respect and Veneration from the most vicious; for all esteem Virtue, tho' they will not go to the Charge of the Purchase: Now, tho' we should come short of Heaven, 'tis some Satisfaction to think that at least we may leave a worthy Memory to after-Ages; that our Virtue may stand upon Record to the last Moment of Time; and that our Names will not sleep by us in the Grave. *Epicurus* felt not the Fits of Stone, or Gout, when he meditated on the Applause, Posterity would give his Writings: This imaginary Pleasure drown'd his real Pains, and made him enjoy a Paradise in Torments: The Violence of the Transport, either mortifi'd his Sense, or inspiritedh is Mind. *Diogenes* prefer'd Glory before scandalous Delights; and the very

Appearance of Vertue before Libertinism: He thought it worth his while to tie himself up to hard Usage, to silence the Clamours of Passions, and to leave behind him glorious Instances of Temperance, and Moderation; that he might make a Figure in Annals, and raise the Fame of his Tub higher than the Trophies of *Miltiades*: And indeed, there is a vast Difference between the Delights of Sense, and those of the Mind; those depend on various Circumstances, and must touch the Organ to please it: Perfumes in *Arabia* cannot affect my Nose; nor a Ragout in *Japan* regale my Palate: But the Pleasures of the Mind move in a larger Compass; they act at Distance; and are neither confin'd to Place, nor Situation: By a certain Spell of natural Magick, it raises up past Pleasures; and feasts it self with Futurities: I can please my self with a Thing that is past, and frame entertaining Thoughts of what is to come: And this priviledge good Men possess; they perceive a present Satisfaction, that they have secur'd their Memory from Obloquy and Detraction; and that when they expire, their Actions will stand up in Defence of their Integrity:

Integrity: If we throw these two Advantages in the Ballance, our Condition will not be worse than yours; we shall at least go off the Stage like wise Men; and you will jump into Nothing like Fools. But tho' we grant Atheists and Latitudinarians lead more pleasant Lives than Christians; this cannot prejudice our Conduct: For still 'tis true, that all is little, superficial, and inconsiderable, that must end. Wherefore to conclude; if it be true *that when two uncertain Propositions lie before me, I am oblig'd by all the Laws of Prudence to chuse that which will turn to my Advantage if True, and cannot prejudice me if it chance to be False*; you must confess, that tho' we are mistaken in our Success, we are not in our Choice; and that we are rather unfortunate, than imprudent.

Theo. Well; suppose all this true: I am not one step nearer my Conversion than before.

Euseb. That is very strange. I have drawn out a Map of your Mistakes: I have ballanc'd your Hopes, with your Fears, your Hazard with your Gain; I have made it clear to Evidence, that your Conduct passes Madness and Extravagance: Is not this sufficient to perswade

you to alter it? Has Folly so violent Attractives? Or Frenzy such unconquerable Charms? Is it better to burn eternally for a Mistake, than to go to the Charge of correcting it?

Theo. Believe me, *Eusebius*, I am not dotingly fond of Errors that cost so dear: I would willingly cast 'em off, were it in my Power; but you know, that to serve God with a Doubt of his Being, is no less criminal, than to deny him: Now I cannot stretch my Faith to Firmness or Certitude.; I must waver on Doubts, and float on Suspicions; for my Understanding is not at command; it lies not under the Discipline of the Will; Evidence alone has the Power to bend it: I confess I want Evidence, and if you'll help me to a handsome Dose, I'll return the Favour with Gratitude.

Euseb. Were you not educated in Christianity?

Theo. I was.

Euseb. Did you not then believe the Existence of a God, and all the high Mysteries of Christianity without Doubts or Fears.

Theo. I did.

Euseb. When you grew in Years, did you never make an Enquiry into Religion?

on? Did you not take the Pains to inform your self why you believed, as well as what you believed? Did you take all upon Trust? And owe your Faith to the Font alone, or to the Climate?

Theo. I pass'd a great Part of my Life in Retirement; and made Reading both my Employment and Pleasure; but especially I level'd my Study at those things that were rather profitable, than diverting; and contributed more to my future Happiness, than my present Satisfaction. Among these (I thought then) that Religion took the first Place; and in this View, I fell upon Polemicks with Eagerness; and continued some time with a never-interrupted Application: My Progress answered my Expectation; I fancied I could defend my Religion against all Opponents, and convince any Man, if it were not evidently true, that 'twas at least evidently credible: To be plain; I never doubted of any Article, and always suspected his Judgment or Morals that did.

Euseb. Perchance those Motives have given your Memory the Slip, perchance Time and little Reflection has sullied their Lustre, and impair'd the Force of their Activity.

Theo. No. I have them all before me : But, methinks, they have an other Face ; they want their former Briskness and Vigour ; they strike but faintly on the Brain ; and tho' they move the Understanding, they cannot settle it : Their Evidence is sunk so low, that it scarce holds up to Probability.

Euseb. Upon Examen and second Thoughts ; have you discover'd Sophistry ? Have they fail'd under Examen, or shrunk under a due Tryal of Logick ?

Theo. Indeed I never put them on the Rack ; nor brought them to the Test of Reason : But I have read in modern Authours such home Arguments against the Being of a God, that tis impossible there should be any such Thing.

Euseb. Hold *Theomachus*, you take Things by the false Handle ; and begin at the wrong End. You had Proofs for the Being of a God, for the Truth of Christian Religion, that flash'd Conviction so strongly, that they could not be resisted with Prudence : Now, in turning over Atheistical Neotericks, you stumble upon some Exceptions : One cannot reconcile God's Justice with his Mercy ; this seems to fall foul upon that : Another can neither look
back

back to the first Moment of his Eternity, nor grasp his Immensity, nor comprehend his Immutability: A Third is out of Conceit with his Government: Were there a God (says he) this would happen, and that would not; the whole Management of the World argues Chance, rather than Wisdom, and wants either Forecast or Power: Hence they conclude, *'tis impossible there should be a God; Therefore there is none*: Blind Worms! who are overpower'd with the Beams of a Planet, and dare fix their Eyes upon the Sun; they know not themselves; and yet would comprehend their Maker: Alas! there is nothing so mean, but has somewhat above us. We fall under the Weight of a Straw, and are not able to dissect a Flie, or to anatomize a Glow-worm. Could I comprehend God, I would scorn to adore him: The very Notion of an infinite Being, implies Obscurity; and Reason tells me that an Understanding confin'd to Limits, can never take a full View of a Thing that has none. Look you, Sir, you must not turn your Back to plain Truths, because you cannot answer some untoward Questions about 'em. Tho' you sub-join a Thousand Objections, their Evidence will

will not be allowed of in the Court of Reason, against positive Demonstrations; for we seldom meet with any thing so manifest, that does not put Reason to a Puzzle on some Occasions. *Zeno* argued himself out of the Existence of Motion, as you have run your self out of the Belief of a Deity. *Motion*, says he, is impossible, therefore there is no such Thing: But his Speculation was not receivable against clear Matter of Fact; and *Diogenes* would not dispute, but walk'd him out of his Error. We lay before you a Hundred Arguments, that prove the Existence of a God; you neither discover Weakness in the Principles, nor Error in the Conclusion; but very fairly step over 'em, and fall upon God's Attributes: You risle his Conduct, and canvas his Proceedings; and then because your purblind Reason is put to a *Nonplus*, and baffl'd in the Inquiry, you conclude his *Essence is impossible*. Possibilities would be drawn up in a narrow Compass, if all Things were impossible that confounds our Understanding: Follow my Advice, Gentlemen, reform your Manners if you intend to believe.

Theo. Had I Faith, Virtue would follow: But how can I mortifie Appetite,
when

when I have no Assurance either of Reward or Punishment.

Euseb. Quite contrary: Bid farewell to your Crimes, and then you will have no Difficulty to believe; whilst 'tis your Interest there should be no God; that Christianity should be an Imposture; you will believe neither; for Interest sways our Judgment, as well as it commands our Actions, and Demonstration it self is less perswasive: 'Tis an Error to think our Will has no Jurisdiction over our Reason; it exercises its Tyranny every day over that noble Faculty; it treats it like a Slave, rather than a Princess; and Atheists commit Rapes upon their Reason, as well as upon the Sex: Do you not believe you were lawfully begotten?

Theo. I do.

Euseb. And yet you have only your Mother's word for it: But should she declare the contrary; I suspect you would not pay the same Deference to her Authority: Now, why do you believe her in the one Case with so much Easiness? Why do you disbelieve her in the other? I suppose her *Negatives* are not less credible than her *Affirmatives*; and that she deserves Belief when she denies,

denies, as well as when she affirms. Here is the Difference: 'Tis your interest to be lawfully begotten; and to be thought so: On this account you enter upon your Father's Estate, and his Titles: But then to come in at the Back-door is a mortifying Disadvantage; it cuts off the Right to Succession, and besides throws an Aspersions on your Person: Now, tho' the Motives in both Cases are the same, the Will byass'd by Interest rides the Understanding; and forces it to assent to the first, and to dissent from the second: If you shake off ill Habits; if you walk within the Bounds of Moderation and Temperance, and confine your Thoughts and Actions to what is lawful; you will presently look upon God, and Religion, as things advantageous to you; because one promises Rewards, and the other will pay 'em; and then prudential Motives by the power of the Will, can easily draw, and fix the Understanding, in the Belief of Truths you now boggle at: But if you persevere in Lewdness, and make over your Heart to Licentiousness; if you dare not look an other World in the Face, nor take a survey of Hell without almost feeling the pains; you

you will never firmly believe there is a God, nor frame any tolerable Notion of Religion; for a stable and settled Perswasion of those Things, runs so contrary to your present Interest, that the Will in Spight of Evidence it self, will fool the Understanding; and either withdraw its Attention from the Consideration of the Argument, or by some fly Trick of *Legerdemain* delude it: No Man in the World ever deny'd a God before he fear'd him; he first deserv'd Damnation, and then thrust Justice out of Being: And so, *Eudoxus*, I fancy you quarrel'd with the Morals of Christianity, before you fell out with the *Creed*; and all Religions, then only began to please you, when Restraint became cumbersome. However, *Theomachus*, in our following Conference I will attack your Understanding; and I hope to propose so strong Arguments, as will be able to fix it in the Belief of a God.

In the mean time dismiss Pride, and turn off Prejudice; this blinds Reason, and that over-looks it; the one will not see Truth, nor the other stoop to embrace it: You must not search after Truth as if you fear'd to find it, such Pursuits are nothing but Ceremony and Grimace;

Grimace; they are Symptoms both of Folly and Obstinacy, and infallible Marks that you have some sinister Design, either to put a Cheat upon your self, or to cast Scorn and Contempt upon your Adversary. Those Arguments I shall propose, examine in God's Name; dissect the whole Discourse; weigh the Principles; measure the Inferences by all the Rules of Mood and Figure: But then fall not upon *Criticism*, as if your whole Business were to find Faults, not Truths; to quarrel with 'em, not to assent: Suppose 'em not Counterfeit, before you have brought 'em to the Touchstone: Again, pray remember there is a great Difference between Words and a good Solution: To return an Answer, is not to enervate a Proof; we may talk much, without talking to the Purpose; and hover about a Question, without coming up to the Point: And as you must take Care not to be too great in your own Opinion, so others must not be too little: For Men scorn to learn of those they condemn: And besides, the least Intelligence from such a Quarter, will be thought Apocryphal: For we measure the Force of Arguments by the Abilities of the Proposer, and always presume

presume they cannot rise above his Height that made them; so that if we under-rate an Adversary, we shall by a necessary Consequence despise his Reasons: For a small Prepossession creates ill Notions, and these byass the Judgment, and give a wrong Turn to the Scale.

But above all things; implore the Succour of that great Being, whose Existence you doubt of: Tell him you are in Quest of his *Existence*, not only to know his Perfections, but to adore his Majesty, to love his Goodness, and to sue for Mercy. Desire him with Tears and Sighs, to dispel those Mists that darken the Understanding, and to dash in Pieces those Chains of Sensuality that fetter the Will; that you may be so fortunate as to see the Truth of his Being, and so Couragious as to embrace it: For the Activity of a Cause answers the Disposition of the Subject: All the Light in Nature will make no Impression on a disorder'd Eye: Fire may consume a Member struck with the Palsy, but cannot heat it into Sensation; and Demonstration may shine upon the Understanding, but this will remain in Darkness, and grope in Obscurity, unless the Will be put in Order; and the
Veils

Veils of Prejudice, Pride, and Licentiousness be remov'd: Now, this is the proper Business of Grace, which God will send to your Assistance, if you ask it with Patience, and Sincerity: But if you will live on your own Fund, if you will engage with a Resolution not to yield; or dispute meerly to overcome; you will live an Infidel, and die a Reprobate: All Arguments will only serve to harden your Heart', to inflame your Guilt, and heighten your Obstina-cy.

D I A L O G U E VIII.

Eudoxus is not satisfy'd with Theomachus's Answers.

AFTER some civilities, *Eusebius* took leave of his Adversaries, and *Theomachus* conducted him to his Coach; he promised to appear the next Day, and to carry on the Conversation: In the mean time *Eudoxus* found himself in some Disorder above Stairs: This Conference had batter'd his Confidence, awak'd

awak'd his Conscience, and alarm'd his Fears: He had only enlarg'd his Belief, to make Room for Debauchery, and would needs save all Men not to damn himself: Restraint was his best Argument against the Necessity of Christian Religion for Salvation, and nothing drew him into such a Latitude of Belief, but an uncontroul'd Liberty of Acting: But when he heard from *Eusebius* the Danger he run, and the Hazzard he expos'd himself too; he found his Blood in a Ferment, and all the Faculties of his Soul in an Uproar: He walk'd about the Room in such a musing Posture, that *Theomachus* (now return'd) could not tell what to make of this mute Scene: His Motion represented a Farce; his looks a Tragedy; and both seem'd extraordinary and amazing. What? said *Theomachus* are you rapt in an Extasie, and fallen over Head and Ears into Speculation. What? turn'd Philosopher *ex tempore*? Your Face has no Metaphysical Turn; lay down the Disguise, and put on your Shape, you make an odd Figure in Masquerade.

Eudox. Is Seriousness so unbecoming? I am sorry to hear Gravity sits so unhand somely upon me, and that I cannot put

put on a thinking Countenance, without acting the Comedian: However I hope you will excuse me; your Conference has given me some Reason to look demurely.

Theom. With all my Heart, upon Condition you'll not turn thinking into a Practice; for, I tell you again, a Stoical Comportment agrees ill with your Constitution, and a contemplative Humour will soure the Blood, and cast you into Fits of the Hypochondry. Methinks, I can read the Subject of your Meditation on your Face: I have travell'd far in Physiognomy, and have drawn up a Map of that Country: In fine, Sir, the Aspect is fitted up for Conversation, as well as the Tongue; and like the *Spartans* comprehends much in a little; it explains a Man's Mind more clear, than one can speak it: You are now anvilling out some petty Revenge against *Eusebius*, and indeed he deserves a Mortification for his Sophistry: He talks with such a magisterial Confidence, as if he vented nothing but Evidence: He is a kind of spiritual Hector, and banters People into Subjection and Slavery; he has an imposing Air, and varnishes his Reasons with such Assurance, that unthink-
ing

ing Gentlemen mistake one for the other :
But you saw how I teased him.

Eudox. I cannot tell what Judgment you frame of this Mornings Contest, but I counsel you not to crow or cry *Victoria*; let it pass for a drawn Battel; he may otherwise think of the Press, and if the Action takes Air and appears in View, perchance the Publick may pronounce against you. We are often fond of our own Exploits, and easily turn the Advantages upon our selves; whereas, God knows, impartial Readers may give it to our Adversaries, and lay Dishonour at our Doors. I must own; I wish you had done your Part better, or that *Eusebius* had done his worse: I find my interior in a Flame: I feel an unknown War in my Breast: Your Conversation has rais'd it; my Fears are enliven'd, and tho' I am not in Hell, methinks, I deserve it.

Theom. Certainly you rave, you have a Feverish Distemper upon you, and the maligne Humour has seiz'd upon the Brain: I never saw a Man before, sound under an Argument, or discours'd into a *Calenture*: You take Apprehensions for Things, and turn a good Nature into an Executioner: Your Troubles are but Dreggs of Education, or airy Spirits
that

that rise from Prejudice : Time will wear 'em out; or Courage will dant 'em ; bear up with Resolution, and you'll scare your Frights, and look those dreadful Bugbears out of Countenance.

Eudox. I had rather you would reason 'em out of Countenance : Uncertainty has begot 'em ; and I fancy Certainty would destroy 'em. Ah *Theomachus* ! If there be a God, you are undone ; and if Christianity be the only Saving Religion, I am undone also.

Theom. Fie, fie : I took you for a Man of Parts ; for a Man above Fear, and out of the Reach of Apprehension. I tell you there is no God, and by Consequence that Christianity is nothing but pure Mummery and Imposture : 'Tis a Poetical Engin, fram'd by crafty Statesmen to heave Men into their Duty.

Eudox. But did you not confesse to *Eusebius*, that you were certain of neither ?

Theom. Prithee ask no Questions : Let us take a turn to the *Blew-Posts* : *Canary* clears more Controversies in an Hour ; than Disputes in an Age : A Glas of good Wine carries off a Doubt in a Trice, and I have found by Experience that
Fears

Fears are sooner drunk, than reason'd away.

Eudox. The present Business is too serious to be debated in a Tavern; and I had rather argue, than laugh with you. If I comprehend *Eusebius* right, we are in ill Circumstances: For tho' it happen that we are nothing in the next World, we are without peradventure Fools in this. For, look you Sir; both our Tenets are very uncertain, and by legal Inference may be false; if they are, what will become of us? Can any Creature sink into a more desperate Misfortune, than we shall certainly meet with? Can we loose more than by forfeiting all? Or can we suffer more, than when we fry in Blames for an Eternity? I confess this Eternity strikes a Damp through every Joint: I dare not play with Thunder, nor stand the Stroak of the Omnipotent. On the other side, tho' the other Tenets prove true; what are we the better? First those Pleasures we pretend too, are as uncertain, as that *Hell* we now ridicule; as that Heaven we burlesque. Secondly, Suppose they were most certain, they are not able to render us happy when we Die, nor content whilst we Live; they

they only serve to engender Diseases, to provoke Conscience; and to prey upon our Estates: They are Things beneath a Rational Creature, nor worth enjoying, nor even the contending for: Now seeing there is such an immense *Chaos* between our Hopes and our Fears; such a monstrous Disproportion between our Loss and our Gain, how is it possible for Men, to swerve more palpably from the common Dictamens of Prudence than we.

Theom. I tell you; the Immortality of the Soul is a meer Flourish of Fancy. 'Tis a Platonical Idea form'd at *Athens*, some Thousand of Years ago, and wafted from beyond Seas in our *Smirna* Fleet.

Eudox. Could you prove your Assertion, my fears would be at an End: I would laugh at my present Frights, and sport with those Flames I tremble at. I am not yet cloy'd with Liberty, nor surfeited with Mirth; nor am I so besotted with pleasures of Sense, as to charge through Fire and Brimstone for their Sake: But you have granted to *Eusebius*, that this very Point has no more Certainty, than that of the Existence of a Deity: So that tho' you Name it

a Fable; for ought we know it may be a real Story.

Theom. But do you remember I told *Eusebius*, that a tottering Belief of a God, or of Christianity, would not do our Turns, tho' we bridled our Passions, and bound up our Appetite to Penance and Mortification: Now if you have in store an Argument, that can convey Conviction, impart it to your self, and stand to the Belief of Christianity with Resolution: But if you have not, and there be a Hell; a wavering Faith, tho' waited on by all the Virtues of the most rigid Recluse, conducts you to Destruction, as surely as Debauchery: Of the two give me therefore a pleasant Life, and a wretched Eternity, rather than a miserable Life, and a miserable Eternity; for of two Evils I am for the less.

Endox. I confess I am at a loss for such an Argument; yet my Mind gives me, that Industry may make a Discovery, either for the one Side, or for the other: *That is*, we may fall upon a *Medium* that will untiddle the Mystery; and either certainly convince us, that all the Dreads and Terrors of a future

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State

State are Fiction and Imposture, or that they are real Things ; for if the Case stood otherwise, I should be tempted to *Timonize*, and clap a Satyr upon our whole Species : I should break its Scutcheon, and throw its Titles of Honour upon *Bears, Lyons, and Tygers* : For certainly Man with his pompous and magnificent Prerogatives of Reason, would sink below the Level of the vilest Insect ; because his Lot would be Fear, and tormenting Thoughts here ; and perchance more tormenting Fire hereafter : Beasts, poor Creatures, neither wastes their Spirits with the tousing Pretentions of Place, nor Precedency ; nor with the carking Appetite of Having, nor with the troublesome Apprehension of Loosing : Their Care neither looks backward nor forward ; their only Labour is to fence against the present Necessity ; they neither expect any Advantage from the future, nor any Misfortune ; they desire not to be better, nor fear to be worse : They gently glide down the Tide of Nature, and sail down contentedly with the Current of Inclination : All their Pains and Pleasure expire with their Life, and when their Taper is spent, and burnt within the Socket ;

Socket; they lay down to sleep, and evaporate into *nothing*: But alas! poor Man, is tantaliz'd with pleasant Dreams of a future Felicity, and haunted with frightful Spectres of never-ending Miseries; yet according to your new *Theology*, he is not able to discover whether these Things have any real Being, but in Imagination: What is this but to hang him on the Tenters? But to stretch him on the Torture? And to make his chief Privilege, *Reason*, subservient to his Torment? There may be a God (say you) a Hell, a Heaven, and one onely saving Religion: If these things are true, and we live as if they were false, we are lost: On the other side, if they are false, and we check Appetite, and conform our Actions to the most rigid Morality; we labour in vain, and take Pains to meet with Disappointment: But then again, if they chance to be true; tho' we live piously, if we believe not stedfastly, our Business is done: We must pitch our Tents with the *Libertines* and *Atheists*, and keep Company with the unfortunate Fry of the Reprobate. 'Tis true, could we believe without Doubts, a little Mortification of our Passions, some Restraint upon Appetite, might secure us: But

this (you say) is impossible, because there are not to be found in Nature, Motives sufficient to settle our Judgments in a firm Belief, either of a Deity or of Religion; so that in Spight of Fate, of Prudence and Vertue, poor Men must agonize here under all the dreadful Convulsions of Fear; and (if there be a God) under the Weight of his Revenge hereafter: This is a murdering Doctrine *Theomachus*; and if true, you must conclude, that Nature is a Step-Mother to Man; and that God created him in his Fury; that he grac'd him with Knowledge, to fit him up for Misery: Let us rather say, we may find some Thread, if we take the Pains to look about us, to guide us out of this wandering Labyrinth: We may dive into Things, till we fall upon Certainty; and discover whether Imposture lies on our Side, or theirs who oppose our Principles: But Sir, I have (I fear) trespass'd upon your Patience, and perchance good Breeding also: But pray charge my Disorder with these Failings, and take an Excuse for Attonement.

D I A L O G U E IX.

Eudoxus unsatisfied with the Discourse of Theomachus, goes to Eusebius.

E*udoxus* return'd to his Lodgings with a heavy Heart: He gave Scope to his Fancy, which warm'd with the Morning Dispute, was become ungovernable: It flew from one dismal Apprehension to another, till at length it wandered into Hell, and drew out all the Terrors of that wretched Region to skare him: The Contemplation of that Place of Torment, of Fire, Darknes and Despair, squeez'd out Tears, Sighs and Lamentations. Woe be to me, said he, when I die here to Pleasure, if I live hereafter to eternal Pains: This may be my Fate, and certainly will be, if Christianity be the only saving Religion, and there be any Punishment for Infidelity: I say it will be; unless I lay aside both Doubts and Lewdness: This is an Affair of the highest Consequence; it deserves my Sollicitude, and will reward my Labour with Interest, which Way soever it turns. I will therefore think of no other Business,

Business, till I have brought this to a happy Conclusion: By the Success of this I must stand or fall.

The Resolution was taken; but he soon found himself in an unknown Region, without Stars, Map or Guide to steer his Course by: He pursued Certainty, but knew not in what Part of the Globe it dwelt, or where to address himself for Direction. First, he thought to fall upon Reading; for Books being the Product of Time and mature Thoughts, are generally polish'd; they tell us how far our Understanding can go towards the Discovery of Truth; and leaving Impertinencies behind, draw off the Spirits and Essence from the Subject: But then he was at a Puzzle about the Choice: Bad Books (said he) are as contagious as lewd Company; and (what is worse) more frequent, and more affecting; for they are set off with luscious Expressions, and with quaint Language, which carries down the Poyson with Pleasure: Like Ladies, they never appear in Publick, but under a gaudy Dress; and Care is taken to wash over the Foulness of the Subject with a pleasing Varnish: A Man may as well learn Chastity in the Stews, Temperance in Taverns, Honesty in
Newgate,

Newgate, Meekness among Hectors, and the Belief of a God among Atheists, as Christianity among these wretched Pamphlets. An ill Subject well handled, doubles the Danger of reading it; the Mischief rises with the Wit, and infects in Proportion to the Art of the Author. In fine, he was toss'd from Resolution to Resolution, without knowing which to resolve on; till at length he reflected of *Eusebius*: 'Tis true, he had no Acquaintance with the *Gentleman*: But being taken with his Mornings Discourse, he was satisfied of his Capacity, and judg'd favourably of his Probity. These Considerations made him break through all Difficulties, and the present Aches of his Mind, added Wings to the Desire of finding a Lenitive.

He went therefore out of Hand to *Eusebius's* Lodgings, and laid open the State of his Interiour; he conjur'd him by all that's sacred to lend his Assistance; and if possible, to cure that Wound, himself had made: He spoke with a Vehemency, that easily perswaded *Eusebius* he was in Earnest; and his Suit was too just to receive a Denial.

Sir, said *Eusebius*, you have address'd your self to a Person, that is perchance

less able, than willing to assist you: I assure you of my Readiness; the Issue must answer for my Ability. I am glad (pardon the Expression) of your Distemper: When we feel the Disease, there is Hopes of a Cure; but when we have no sense of our Condition, 'tis time to think of a Coffin. Neither spurn, nor kick at Providence for this painful Usage: The Operation (no doubt) is sharp, but withal necessary: Health of the Body is not recovered without Pain; an Impostume calls for a Lance, and Oppletion for unpalatable Evacuatories. The same Methods are applicable to Diseases of the Soul: Whilst Conscience suffers Debauchery without Murmur, without Complaint; whilst we enjoy a profound Peace within us, in the midst of Crimes, as well as of Innocence; we find no Inclination to reform: That false Tranquility lulls us a Sleep, it keeps serious Reflections at a Distance, and perswades our foolish Credulity, that no Danger threatens us, because we apprehend none: But when Offences sit uneasy upon us, when Pleasures gall us, when Infidelity becomes suspected, and Lewdness it self troublesome; we begin to survey our Conduct, to compare the Present with the Future,

to face our Hopes with our Fears, and the Delights of this Life with the Torments of the other: And when we discover those gross Illusions we lie under, a little struggling with the help of God's Grace, will break thro' all Impediments which interpose Between us and our Duty: Take therefore this Anguish of Mind as a Pledge of God's Kindness, and of your future Felicity; he strikes in his Mercy, as well as in his Justice; he heals when he wounds, and spares when he punishes: Never differ the Search of Truth, nor faulters till you have found it: Slackness in a Point of this Importance is always dangerous, and sometimes mortal: When we refuse God's kind Invitation, he often chastises our Incivilities *in Flagranti*, and scarce leaves a Moment between the Affront and the Revenge. When I was some Years ago in *Flanders*, an Officer of my Acquaintance gave me a Visit; he was one of those, who make no Distinction between Religion and Faction; who jest at Faith, and spend their Lives in its Service: He could no more believe that Church true he fought for, than that he fought against: He ridicul'd the one, and condemn'd the other; he

he treated Morality ill in his Discourse, but worse in Practice: I thought a little Warmth and Expostulation were justifiable on such an Occasion, and so I took him up roundly; I drew out in lively Colours the Horror of his Life, the Unwarrantableness of his Proceeding, and the Severity of those Pains God had prepar'd for Libertines in the next World; together with the Curses that would fall upon his Head in this: He took leave of me, and retir'd to his Inn, but after Dinner he return'd: I have often (said he) receiv'd Proofs of your Kindness, but never greater than this Morning: I have look'd into my self since I saw you; and confess my Case would be desperate, had I less than an infinite Mercy to confide in: Some urgent Business calls me to my Garrison; but next Week I will return, and advise with you about the grand Affair of my Salvation. This is a Call from God (answer'd I) and perchance it may be the last: The *Campaine* draws near; and when once you have taken the Field, you will neither be Master of your Time, nor your Life; your Employment challenges *that*, and a Bullet may dispose of *this* before you are aware.

I am sensible (reply'd the Gentleman) of my Case, and of the Danger; and nothing shall alter my Resolution; and so he departed. He kept his word, and within ten Days return'd; he pass'd by my Lodgings, and told me he would not fail after Dinner to wait upon me, and hop'd to bring his Business to a happy Conclusion: Permit me, Sir, (said I) to attend you at your Inn: 'Tis much more easie to fall into Company, than to disingage your self: Men of your Calling, had rather storm a Half-Moon, than assail Custom, or attack Ceremony: But he would not hear of my Proposition; he left the Company, and was on his way; when unfortunately he met with a Friend, who invited him to a Bottle of *Champaigne*: He would not except of the Invitation; but the other would not be deny'd: And so at length away they march'd together: One Bottle drew on another, and their Debauch ended with the Night: In the mean time, an Express calls him to his *Regiment*: The *French* have taken the Field; and all must march to watch their Motions: He returns Home in Post; he goes to the Camp, and shortly after looses his Life
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at *Steenkerk*: We may truly say, this poor Gentleman was near Heaven; but God send the unhappy Rencontre of a Friend did not put him out of the Way! He was invited to Repentance, he made a fair Advance; and (I may say) the Business was almost finish'd, because he seriously resolv'd to conclude it: But a Bottle of *Champaigne* put in a Demurr: It suspended the Execution; and then the sudden March of the Troops broke off the Negotiation: He went to the Field a *Libertine*, and in all probability dy'd one: As God touch'd his Heart, so he has softened yours: Pray Sir, let not Negligence misuse the Favour, nor turn it into a Curse: Let it stand up for you at God's Tribunal, as a Witness of Gratitude, not of Obstinacy. I counsel you for some Days to withdraw into a Place of Retirement: Visits will distract you, and may stifle your pious Resolution, if your Design takes air: If your Companions learn you are going into an other Interest, they will raise a hundred Batteries against your Constancy; and tho' you come off with Victory, you will not get clear of their Temptations without Danger:

ger: I will willingly wait upon you into the Country, if you can pitch upon a convenient Place.

Eudox. You will infinitely oblige me: My House is but four Mile off; and if you please, we will take Coach this Evening.

Euseb. I am content, but I must excuse my Depart to *Theomachus*, otherwise he may send *Hue* and *Cry* after me; and *Si quis* me in the next Gazette.

He sent him a Letter to let him know that a Business of Importance requir'd his Presence in the Country; that he would dispatch it with convenient Speed, and that the same Moment his Hands were rid of that Trouble, he would return to prosecute the Conference. *Theomachus* answer'd he was his own Master; that he might take his Time, and that he would expect his Return with Pleasure: They immediately took Coach, and arriv'd at *Eudoxus's* House.

D I A L O G U E X.

Eudoxus retires with Eusebius into the Country, where they meet with Ariovistus a High-flown Latitudinarian.

E*Udoux's* Mother receiv'd her Son with Tenderness: She was a Lady of a Piety above the common; she lov'd her Son, but could not dissemble his Vices: She often admonish'd him of the Danger he expos'd his Soul to; and sometimes mingled Tears with gentle Reproofs: But his Time was not yet come, and all her Admonitions only serv'd to highten his Obduracy: Yet she gave not over: She implor'd God's assistance in private, and beseech'd his Mercy to strike out of this Rock some Tears of Repentance; to recall this Prodigal, who had imbezill'd all his Treasures of Grace, and pawn'd his Religion to Prostitutes: Her friends admir'd her Charity, and pity'd it. Once a *Divine* assur'd her, that a Child of Tears would never perish: She took the words for an Oracle, and fancy'd he spoke by
Inspiri-

Inspiration : Tho' her Son's Profaneness touch'd her to the Quick ; the Hopes of his Conversion kept her in Heart ; and the more he ran from Piety, the more she practis'd it.

When *Eudoxus* arriv'd, she read some Change in his Face ; his Behaviour was more grave ; his Looks more sober, and all his Carriage breath'd an Air of Modesty : At first she suspected the Dice had run cross, and that the Cause of his Melancholy lay in the Pocket : Then she fear'd he was hammering out some amorous Intrigue, or lay under the Mortification of a criminal Disappointment : But *Eudoxus* soon dissipated her Suspicions, by telling the Cause of his unexpected Arrival : She was over-joy'd at the News, and almost sunk under the Excess : She gave *Eusebius* a thousand Thanks, and stil'd him her Son's good *Angel* : They were sitting down to Supper, when in comes *Ariovistus* with another Gentleman. The Lady was surpris'd at the Arrival of so unexpected a Guest ; his very Sight drew the Blood to her Face, and tho' she was Mistress of her Words and Actions, she could not Command her Resentment : She fear'd least this importune Visit might nip her Son's Resolutions,

solutions, and dash in Pieces the Hope she had of his Conversion: However she forgot not Civility in the very Heat of her Disturbance, and skreen'd off her Concern with a hearty Welcome.

But after Supper she took *Eusebius* aside, and expos'd her Fears with all the *Energy* of Tears and Passion. Sir, (said she) God send your Charity meet with Success: I suspect *Ariovistus* cloaks some ill Design under the specious Outside of a Visit, and that another Errand brought him here, besides meer Civility: His Morals run even with his Religion; he believes what flatters Pride, and acts whatever fawns upon Sense; he goes upon one Principle, which is to stick at nothing, that sides with Interest, or gratifies Appetite. This Man first furnish'd *Eudoxus* with corrupt Maxims, and *Theomachus* taught him the Application: In fine, both have contributed to his Destruction, and my Misfortune.

Eusebius desir'd her not to take the Alarm. I will find Occasion (said he) to engage *Ariovistus* in a Dispute, I doubt not of the Success: The Overthrow of the Master may work upon the Scholar. He may yeild to these Reasons, *Ariovistus* (I am sure) will not be able to resist. The next Morning,

Morning, when they sat together in the Parlour, Chance gave the Cue to a hot Debate, that cover'd *Ariovistus* with Confusion, and *Eusebius* with Glory.

DIALOGUE XL

God does neither command, nor permit us to conform to the Religion of the Country where we live.

THE Post brought *Eudoxus* a News-Letter from *London*, which gave an account of new Laws enacted against Papists.

Ariov. This Act is worthy of that great Assembly. I have nothing against the Proceeding, but that its too moderate and indulging: Besides methinks it should have reach'd all Dissenters; for all being guilty of Obstinacy, none should be exempt from Punishment.

Euseb. How? too Indulging? What will you call Severe? Papists are disseiz'd of their Birth-right, stript of Property, and expos'd to the Insolence of villanous Informers, and Catch-polls; and after

ter all, you complain of Moderation. Mistake me not Sir: I neither arraign the Wisdom nor the Justice of the *Parliament*: That *August Body* may have Reasons unknown to us: But I disapprove your persecuting Humour: Dissenters are our fellow Subjects; the Relation deserves Tenderness, and calls for some Compassion: It's Barbarity to out-rage a *Fellon* at the Bar, or to insult over a condemn'd Wretch at *Tyburn*; much more over Dissenters; who for ought we know, have no other Crime, but their Religion.

Axiom. Let 'em conform, and they shall enjoy the Protection of the Government, and the Liberty of Englishmen: But if they take the Pet, and stray from the establish'd Worship of the Realm; the Common-wealth must take Notice of their Prevarication, and punish it: And as those who suffer for the Breach of Laws, dye deservedly; so they who lay down their lives for any Religion Out-law'd by the Common-Wealth, are Malefactors, not Martyrs: They only pass through one Punishment into another: Thousands (*Eusebius*) are Canoniz'd here on Earth, that will never be *Sainted* in Heaven.

Euseb.

Euseb. Hold Sir, this Doctrine should be bleacht ; its so monstrously foul, there is no enduring it : It should pass a *Quarantine* in some *Lazaretta* ; (me thinks) it smells rank of Infection. Blasphemy sits on every Syllable : What think you ? Did *St. Laurence* and *St. Stephen* dye like Criminals ? Are not their Names Register'd in the Book of Life, as well as in the Martyrologe ? Yet they dy'd for a Religion, condemn'd by the supreme Authority of *Rome* and *Jury*. Sir, I would have you Dispute this Point at old *Baillie*. Blasphemy is punishd with Fire in this World, as well as in the next.

Ariau. Heat and Inveſtive rather fret an Adversary, than convince him : More Reason and less Passion, are proper for a Man of your Age and Character : You are on the Decay Sir ; your Deportment should be as cold as your Blood ; and your Passions as grey as your Head. I say, God made Man for Commerce, we cannot live on our own Fund ; we must barter with our Neighbours ; and this foreign Correspondence is requisite to furnish our Happiness : A sociable Life is impracticable, (I would say impossible) unless inferiours lie under
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an indispenfable Obligation of obeying, and Superiours have an uncontrollable Power to ordain all Thofe things, that are neceffary to fupport and conferve Society.

Now, what can be more neceffary than Union, and Harmony of Opinions? This cements all the Parts, and moulds 'em into one great Body: It infpirits 'em to Action in their design'd Station: It combines their Intereft; and by Confequence their Endeavours: But when their Minds are divided, their Interests are feparated; and then they club into Faction; and whilst each Cabal drives at private Ends, the whole Fabrick of the Government firft totters, and then falls into Confufion. But of all Divifions, thofe that fpring from Differences in Religion have ever prov'd the moft fatal. Zeal has open'd more Veins than Cruelty; and laid wafte more Provinces than Ambition: It has rifled thofe very Places, Avarice it felf left untouch'd; and fet on fire thofe Religious Edifices, Impiety revered: It has brought fome Princes to the Scaffold, and others to Abdicate: Infine, new Seditions break in upon the State with new Religions, and the eftablifhed Government

vernment is always struck at, with the establish'd Church. Pretence of Piety leads the *Van*, but *Sword*, *Cannon*, and *Desolation* bring up the *Rear*.

Seeing therefore God commands us to live in Society; he has impower'd the chief Magistrate, with a full Commission to enact those Laws that are requisite for the furthering this great Design: Now, Nothing under Heaven can be more necessary, than a Power to establish Religion; therefore God has entrusted every supreme Magistrate with that Power; whence it follows, that every Religion settled by Law, binds all those who live under the Protection of that State; and by Consequence I dare not excuse any *Dissenter* from Treason, both against the Common-wealth, and God.

In a word, we must conform our Belief to that of the Country where we live; nor can any Pretence of Conscience or Revelation exempt us from the Obligation: Hence, I say, that *Stephen* the *Deacon* lost his life at *Jerusalem* as fairly, as *Stephen* the *Joyner* at *Oxford*: They both fell by the Law, and therefore justly. Death makes not a Martyr, but the Cause; this alone distinguishes

distinguishes the Innocent from the Guilty.

Euseb. Bless me! where are we? The Jews tore their Garments, when they heard Blasphemies; but Christians turn it into Entertainment: Certainly Nothing but Damnation is able to force out such Flaming Expressions: Your Discourse is too rank to undergo a Dissection; it carries with it a Complication of Crimes, that won't bear the very Naming: Like flagitious Malefactors, they infect on the *Hurdle*, and kill at their Execution: Its almost safer to dissemble, than to arraign them; and they are taught, whilst they are reprov'd: But seeing you have flung Poyson among the Audience, I'll venture to present 'em an Antidote. You say *St. Stephen* dy'd a Rebel, no Martyr; that he fell by Law, and consequently by the Hands of Justice: But this hellish Logick argues our blessed Saviour into Rebellion, and stigmatizes him for a convicted Conspirator; for certainly he dy'd by Command of the Magistrate: Innovation in Matters of Religion made up one Part of the Charge against him, and Treason the other. I suppose this horrid Insolence lay out of Sight; for Gen-

Gentlemen of your Perswasion, are short-sighted; and are so taken up with Principles, that they over-look Illations: Remember, Sir, we live under a pious Princess, and a reforming Parliament; So that I do not despair within some Days to hear, that severe Laws are past against those that blaspheme God, as well as against those that serve him.

Ariovistus began an Apology, but *Eusebius* refus'd to hear it.

Sir (said he) the Text is too plain to need a *Comment*; and too horrid to deserve one: To excuse Blasphemy, is but a Hairs-breadth from defending it: The very Hearing of the *Word* abates the Horror of the *Crime*: For no Offences are less detested, than those that are often spoken of: Besides, I have only glanc'd at an Inference; the Principle is more flagitious, and therefore must be brought to the Bar. You say God commands us to conform to the Religion of the Country, where we live; and that to profess any other, or to believe Nothing, is equally criminal.

Ariov. I say so.

Euseb. Is your Assertion Universal.

Ariov.

Ariov. It takes in all Religions ; it reaches all Nations, as well as all Ages.

Euseb. God therefore commands me (when I am in *England*) to deny *Transubstantiation*, *Prayers for the Dead*, *Seven Sacraments*, &c. But if Business calls me to *Paris*, *Rome*, or *Madrid* ; he commands me to steer about, and believe 'em : In *Christendom* I must believe *Christ* is God ; but if a brisk Gale wafts me over into *Asia*, I must deny it : At *Constantinople* I must swear there is one God, and that *Mahomet* is his Prophet ; but at my return into the *West*, I must change my Tune ; I must swear the Prophet into an Impostor, and his Revelations into Forgery : But if I steer towards the *North*, and set up in *Lapland* ; then I must bow to a *Red Clouth* ; and pour forth my Orisons to *Madam Puss* : Again, if I double the *Cape*, and put in at *Cochin* ; I must fall prostrate before an *Ape's Grinder*.

Ariov. Well, and what harm in all this ?

Euseb. Why truly, travelling will be expensive : Before we set out, we must provide our selves with *Alexander Rossé's View of Religions* ; we must make a handsome

some Collection of *Astrolabes, Quadrants,* and *Jacob's Staffs*, to find the Lines of *Longitude*, and *Latitude*; for in your Hypothesis, *Mathematicks* must be our Rule of Faith, and *Climats* the Motives of Credibility. This is a pretty System, and has the Advantage of Novelty to recommend it: I have often seen Controversies try'd by *Scripture, Tradition,* and *Reason*; but to compose a Difference by *Logarithms, Sinus's,* and *Targets* is extraordinary: The Invention is worthy of your Wit, and of the same Piece with your Piety: In good time you may improve the Discovery, and find out the true Religion (as we do true Guineas) by the Weight.

But if in *England Transubstantiation* be false, it cannot be true in *France, Spain,* and *Italy*; and if in *Europe* our blessed Saviour be really God; all the Power of the *Grand Seignor* can never turn him into a meer Man in *Asia*: In fine, if *Mahomet* be an Impostor in the West, how can he be a Prophet in the East? For Truth is no Trimmer, it will not stand on both Sides of the Contradiction.

It's evident therefore that God commands me to believe a Falsehood, either

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in *England*, or beyond Sea ; nay, and engages his Authority to perswade me. He threatens Hell, if I refuse, and offers Heaven, if I conform. In *England* I Honour him, by swearing Transubstantiation is a meer Fiction, the Product of Ignorance, and Spawn of Superstition ; but this *Tramontane* Honour carries damnation with it at *Rome* ; here I must swear Transubstantiation is a very real Thing ; and so flie in the Face of my own Evidence. Perjury therefore in your Religion passes for an Act highly meritorious, *id est*, a scandalous Crime, for a most edifying Vertue. What mad Notions do you frame of God ? You level him with *Oates*, and fling him below *Bedloe* : You seem to acknowledge a Deity meerly to make him capable of Contempt, and Infamy.

Ariov. You mistake me ; I neither impeach God of Forgery, nor Imposture ; I do not question his Veracity, nor squint upon his Sanctity : I only maintain he commands me to be a Protestant in *England*, and a Papist at *Rome* ; to believe Christ is God in Queen *Ann's* Court, and that he is a meer Man in the Sultans ; but he does not engage his Word for Truth of either Side.

Euseb.

Enfeb. And, I suppose, he commands you to profess *Whiggism* in the *Amsterdam Coffee-House*, *id est*, to blend Faction with Religion, and shroud Infidelity under Hypocrisy: For look you, Sir, you cannot possibly believe the Articles of the Church of *Rome True*, without pronouncing those of the Church of *England False*: For these are *Negatives* of the other; if God commands you to chop Beliefs with the *Climat*, he commands you to play the Hypocrite, on one Side of the Water; which is a Crime against the first Principles of Reason, and can no more be commanded by God, than practis'd by Man: For such a Behaviour is a Burlesque; a Satyr on all Religion; and by Consequence on the *Author* and *Object* of it.

But again, if God commands me to be a Protestant in *England*, and a Papist at *Rome*; a Turk in *Asia*, and a Christian in *Europe*; he engages his Word for a Falstiy; for the Church of *England* maintains the Articles of her Belief were reveal'd; the Church of *Rome* says the same, in Defence of hers; and the *Mahometan* Congregation lays all its Impostures on Revelation: When there-

fore God commands you to be a Protestant, Papist, or *Muselman*, he commands you to believe he has Reveal'd the particular Tenets of these Sects, and consequently avouches for the Truth of 'em: For whatever he Reveals, must be true: So that to oblige you to believe, he has Reveal'd such a Point, and to engage his Word for the Truth of it, is one and the same Thing: Now the particular Tenets of these Churches cross upon one another, and therefore all cannot possibly be true; whence it follows that God engages his Authority for a Lye, and pawns his Veracity for a Falseness: You subject his Sanctity to a Weakness we all blush at, tho' we all commit it, and even level him with Knights of the Post.

Moreover, if Christ be a *meer Man*; how can God command Christians to Adore him? And if he be God, how can he forbid the *Turks*, *Nestorians*, and *Arians* to pay him Homage due to his Divinity? God can no more strip himself of his Sovereignty, than of his Being: He can as soon take a Creature into his Throne, as make over his Title to Adoration: In a word, either Man can Offend, or he cannot; if he cannot, let him

him bid farewell to all Religions, and take leave of Morality; let him model his Actions by *Epicure*, and his Faith by *Protagoras*: But if he can offend; what clashes more directly with all Laws Natural and Divine, than Idolatry? If this Spiritual Incest be Innocent, what can be Criminal; and if God can command so sacrilegious an Action; what can he forbid?

Ariovistus was pincht, he saw himself in the Toils, and knew not how to disengage himself; his Concern flew to his Face, and every Posture shew'd Uneasiness, and Anger. Come Sir (said he at last to *Eusebius* with a forc'd Smile) I have mistaken my Errand, I came not to Dispute, but to be Merry; let Arguments give place to a Bottle, it's more satisfactory to see the Bottom of a Glass, than of a Question; and to drain Bumpers, than Controversies: We have run the first Heat, it's time to rub.

Euseb. You Latitudinarian Gentlemen are strange Creatures; you hector Religion and Piety with such a daring Confidence, when you are out of the Reach of an Adversary; that one would swear both Sense and Reason had embrac'd your Interest: But when you receive a

Blow, you retreat to Jests; you parry against Proofs with Railleries, and oppose Laughter to Reason: To be plain, you misplace your Passions; you smile when you should tremble; and laugh when you should cry: Had you any Apprehension of a God; you would dread those Flames, that his eternal Justice has prepar'd below to burn, not to consume Blasphemies; these hideous Flights of Prophaneness and Impiety would be Pain and Penance to you: You lay such desperate Commands to his Charge, as fit him rather for Contempt, than Veneration; and make him more worthy of Horror, than Adoration: For if your Divinity be Orthodox; he abets Lyes, commands Idolatry, and perswades Perjury; and so Mans Vices make up the Roll of his Perfections; and we must revere in him what all human Laws punish in us.

Ariov. You are dispos'd for a Touch of Polemicks: But if you are above the Laws of Decency and Breeding; I am not: I resolve not to turn Clown for Company: I have too much Respect for my Lady to be clamorous in her Presence; and think it as gentle to Duel, as to dispute before

fore her : Besides we are upon Theological Niceties, unnecessary to be known by the Learned ; and impossible to be understood by the Vulgar.

Sir (said the Lady) let not Ceremony break off the Conference : We stand not here upon Grimace, or Reservedness ; and tho' we did, your Defeat will atone for your Rudeness : To be plain ; I am impatient to see your Vanity last ; your Pride disciplin'd, and your rodomontading Genious penanc'd with Confusion. How often in my House have you not only made a Practice, but a Boast of Prophaneness, and defended the Crime, by committing a greater ? You have Lampoon'd those Gentlemen that durst stand up in Defence of Religion, and daub'd 'em with the Reproaches of Bigottry, and Superstition ; you question their Judgments, and dubb'd 'em Fools, who would not swallow down all Religions ; and bluster'd with imposing an Assurance, as if it were as easy to defend Libertinism, as to abett it. Sir, you are in sight of an Adversary ; look him in the Face ; stand your Ground, and defend your Principles, or condemn 'em by an *Affidavit* ; that your Repentance may be as publick as the Scandal :

Your Honour is at Stake, and there is no Mean between a Victory and an Overthrow.

This sudden Tempest blown from an unexpected Quarter, soon rais'd a Tumult in *Ariovistus's* Breast; Shame, Anger, and Revenge, broke loose; and fan'd his Resentment to such a heighth, that it almost stifled his Reason: He roll'd a hundred Thoughts in his Head; and almost as many Resolutions; yet he could not fix on any: To retaliate, was not only unmanly, but also uncivil; for tho' a Lady be not below a Man's Anger, she is below his Revenge: To break off the Dispute was dishonourable; and to baffle *Eusebius* difficult: However at last, having ballanc'd his Fears with his Hopes, he concluded his Reputation would suffer less by continuing the Dispute, than flying it: For tho' *Eusebius* might foil him with Reason, he thought himself superior at Raillery; which oftentimes even Men of Parts mistake for Wit, and receive for Reason. At least he had found upon Experience, that Noise in Disputes stands for Evidence, and that these carry off the Honour of Conquest in the Opinion of the Audience, who speak loudest, not who discourse best: These

These Considerations sway'd him to accept of a second Engagement; wherefore turning himself first to the Lady.

Madam (said he) I thought I ow'd your Character and Person some Respect, but seeing you are pleas'd to forego the Debt, I shall supercede the Payment; I perceive Deference is sometimes unacceptable; and Civility clownish. I will therefore for the future take my Liberty, and never stand off in Restraint or Ceremony.

Then addressing himself to *Eusebius*: Sir, continu'd he, you misunderstand me: I mean not that God commands us to Conform to the Religion of the State where we live. No; he permits us only; like the royal Eagle he preys on Hearts; these he requires: So that if we love, honour, and obey him, we keep up to the very Height of his Commands. He permits all exterior Ceremonies, tho' vain, superstitious, and wicked; a good Intention sanctifies an ill Action, and the Uprightness of our Hearts compounds for the Errors of our Worship: In fine, Sir, God looks on all the Failures of our Understanding as pure Mistakes, not Crimes; and those he cannot approve, he pities.

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Euseb. I understood you before, and apprehend you at present: You draw the Thesis into a less Compass, and turn God's Command into a bare Permission; *id est*, I have driven you from one Retrenchment, and you are clapt behind another; but this is no more tenable, than the First, and you will be forc'd to surrender. Tell me; does God permit all Religions?

Ariov. All that are; or ever were in the World.

Euseb. All? That Man certainly deserves Damnation, that can find no Religion to his Gouſt: But do no Actions outrage Nature?

Ariovistus made a Pause; and seem'd at a Loss for an Answer: He saw what *Eusebius* drove at; and that he only coasted the main Question, to draw him into an Ambuscade. Sir, said he, your *Quære* is captious; and though some are of Opinion, that Vertue and Vice are rather Names than Things; yet I condescend so far, as to grant that Murders, Blasphemies, and Adulteries, flie at Nature, and are in a very obvious and litteral Sense criminal, and opprobrious.

Euseb.

Euseb. God, I suppose permits not these unnatural Abominations; if he has no punishments in reserve for such profligate Offenders, under-rate Transgressors may expect a Recompence.

Ariov. God disapproves such hideous Enormities, as shames Nature, and even entrench upon Breeding; they deserve Hell, and will feel it, unless Repentance appease Divine Justice.

Euseb. Why, then this Permission is no more Universal, than the Command; for if God's Permission comprehends not Crimes that assail Nature; it takes not in those Religions, that insult Nature in the very Act of Worship. Strike off the Catalogue, the Religion of the *Mexicans*, who to Honour their God, broke through all the Natural Laws of Justice, and Honesty: For they first invaded the neighbouring Provinces with Fire and Sword; and then rip'd open the breasts of Twenty thousand Captives upon the sacrilegious Altars of their barbarous Divinities, and by a bloody Metamorphosis turn'd Cruelty into Piety; an worship'd God, by prophaning Nature.

The superstition of the *Peruvians* lies open to the same Exception : These savage Idolaters dy'd the Earth with the reeking Gore of human Sacrifices, and polluted their Temples with unnatural Prostitutions; they train'd up Youths for that lewd Purpose, and hallow'd their most Religious Rites with the most flaming Abominations: In a word; Nature forbids, what their impure Gods commanded, and human Laws purge with Fire, the most essential Acts of their Religion.

If we leave *America*, and Ship for *Asia*, we shall meet with the same Vices; tho' the People are more civiliz'd, they are not less brutal. The *Thracians*, *Huns*, and *Phœnicians* worship'd their Deities, by worrying their own Species, and so built their Piety on Murders, and Cruelty. In *Africa* the Superstition of the *Carthaginians* was more formidable than their Arms; and their Priests were more cruel in their Temples, than their Generals in the Field: They lock'd poor Infants in the glowing Statutes of *Saturn*; and plac'd their Devotion rather in the Torment, than death of Innocents. The old *Egyptians* drown'd their Reason in Honour of *Mars*; and then pro-

prosecuted their Devotion with Clubs and Swords; and he was judg'd the most Zealous, who had the least of a Man, and most of a Butcher.

The *Babilonians*, and *Phœnicians* defil'd their Temples with Whoredom, and Sodomy. Prostitution always preceded Marriage; and those Women who refus'd to Shave their Heads, were doom'd to expose their Honour, and to Adorn the Temple of *Venus* with the spoils of their Chastity: So that those infamous Religions branded Honesty with Infamy; they stigmatis'd Continence, ennobled Lewdness.

I Blush at the very Thought of the Rites of *Venus* the *Corinthian*, where Women were Ordain'd Priests by the most scandalous, and outrageous Acts of Lust; and Consecrated by Adulteries: They were Strumpets before they could be qualify'd for Priesthood; and deserv'd *Bridewell* to be fit for the Altar. I suppose these Religions come not within the Pale of Permission: For how can God permit those Actions good Men condemn, and Debauchees blush at; that startle Nature, and confound Wickedness? He must take notice of such Enormities, or renounce Sanctity; he must
must

must punish 'em, or let fall his Claim to Justice: In fine, he must maintain his Character. The Atheist who denies God, is less criminal, than he who worships him with Murders, and Fornication.

Ariov. God permits not those Religions that affront Nature, and discard the first Principles of Reason: When Temples become Slaughter-Houses, and Priests Butchers; when the Stews are Consecrated, and Adulteries Canoniz'd, it's time to separate from such Congregations.

Euseb. You found a Retreat: First God commanded to Conform to the the Religion of the Country where we dwell; then you turn'd his Command into a Permission; and now you restrain this: Like the *Parthians* you fight in your Retreat, and place your Safety in your Heels: But this Expedient will not answer Expectation: I have you in View; and will not leave the Chace, till I have have either run down your Impiety, or confounded it. But Sir, suppose a *Montezuma* should threaten Death, unless you abjur'd Christ for *Vitziliputzli*, would not God on so pressing an Occasion,

casion, permit you to embrue your Hands in human Sacrifices ?

Ariou. No Man living in a noble Way fears Death less than my self : I would come into the World meerly to make a handsome *Exit* : Yet I would not part with my Life for a Ceremony : My Belief is not untractable ; it can bow upon Occasions, and connive at those Things it does not Approve : What is not Impious, is always Lawful ; and therefore I wou'd rather upon an Exigency, Conform, than Dye. Tho' I am sure there are *Antipodes*, I would not like that foolish Bishop, maintain the Truth at the Expence of my Blood ; this would be to trifle away Life ; and is rather a Demonstration of my Folly, than of the Roundness of the Earth.

Should *Montezuma* Command me in his Dominions to abjure Christ ; I should Reverence his Orders : For the Supreme Magistrates Will, is the Law of the Subject : But whether I might in Conscience espouse his Religion is a Case worthy of some sober Reflections : For Life is a tender Thing ; Self-preservation has Charms ; and the unexperien'd Condition of Separation is a very lawful Pretext to stay in the World :

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To be fired, or bastonnaded hence is a painful Operation, and we are not obliged to such a troublesome Removal.

Besides Life (I conceive) was given us for noble Ends; and therefore we must not part with it, out of a Bravado: If we disband, and leave our Colours without our great Masters Leave, we shall pay for our Desertion, and meet with a worse Welcome from an angry God in the next World, than from a barbarous Emperour in this. Seeing therefore I may give my Heart to God, whilst I offer human Sacrifices to the *Mexican* Idol; I may rather conform, than die for Disobedience: For he who forces, commits the Sin (if the Action be unlawful) not he who obeys by Compulsion.

The Company startled at this strange Divinity: Amazement tied their Tongues; and Horror run through every Joynt. At last its well (cry'd *Eusebius*) we have both Scripture to appeal to, otherways we might be puzzled by the Impudence of those, who treat *Goodness* unhand-somely by Practice, and unchristianly by defending their Excesses: Their Manners are so bad, that nothing can be worse

worse but the Wit and Confidence they employ to excuse em. I see, continued (*Eusebius*) you measure Man's Perfections downwards, and judge him more reasonable, the less he acts with Reason.

You are a Leveller in Morality as well as in Religion, and make no Distinction between Vice and Vertue; or at least with an extatick Turn of the Heart, you transform one into the other: This is Direction of Intention with a Witness. A Man that can juggle the most flagitious Crimes into Piety, must be born under a very unfortunate Star to *miscarry*. You may dip your Hands in Blood, plunge your Body into the very Sink of Lewdness, and with a safe Conscience make over your Soul to the Devil; an Omnipotent Cast of the Heart rectifies all, a good Intention atones for a bad one.

But why did you just now exempt from the general Permission those Religions, that in the Act of Worship affront Nature? For you may turn your Heart to God every jot as well, when your Life is secure, as when its endanger'd; so that if Direction of Intention

tention salves Conscience on some Occasions, it may on all: Do not Murders, Cruelties, and most unnatural Lusts turn upon Nature when my Life lies at Stake, as well as when it does not? Do they jar with Reason when I hazard Nothing, and fawn upon it when I risque All? Certainly Sins of this black Dye vary not with Circumstances, they change not their Nature as the Cameleon does its Colour; their Blackness lies in the Complexion, not on the Fancy; they are always the same, *id est*, odious to God, and abominable in the Sight of Men.

You say Life was given us for noble Ends, and therefore must not be flung away, either in a Pet, or Bravado: It's true; but then what can Imagination frame more Noble, more Sublime; than the Defence of God's Honour, and our own Nature? Than to vindicate the just Rights, and Prerogatives of Vertue from the illegal Usurpations of Vice? These Enterprises are worthy of a Man; it's more glorious to Dye for such a Cause, than to Conquer in the Field. When we Sacrifice our Lives for him who gave 'em, our Generosity will be pleaded to Advantage, not only in the next World, but also in this. No Action is truly
Glorious,

Glorious, that is not Vertuous ; and therefore your *Cesar's* and *Alexander's* in spite of all Trophies are Infamous in the Sight of God ; their Temerity is laught at by the Angels, and their Ambition severely punish'd by the Protector of Orphans, and just Avenger of Pupils : They had nothing Great but Pride and Folly ; their Glory sprung from Plunder, and their Renown from Slaughter ; but if they deserve Praise for ransacking Cities, for overturning Kingdoms, and invading Empires, we may make Panegyricks of Plagues, raise Triumphant Arches to Famines, and erect Statutes to Hurricans, or Inundations : In a word ; we live meerly to serve God ; this is our End, and a noble One : Passion indeed, or Discontent, are ill Diseases to Dye of, but then Libertinism is a dangerous Motive to live : Our Disobedience is no less Criminal, when we refuse to quit our Post upon Command, than when we abandon it without Order : We are discharg'd of the Duty of Living, when we must purchase Breath at the Expence of Conscience ; and certainly we forfeit Innocence, when we commit, or abett Murders or Adulteries ; and by Consequence, a Man must
part.

part with Life, when he cannot keep it without Treason against Nature, and Rebellion against its Author.

But, I suppose, the noble End you propose to your self, is to spin out Life, as long as the Thread will reach; to stretch Nature to its utmost, and not to venture one single Puls, but upon good security of Pleasure: You had rather spend it in the service of *Venus*, than of Vertue; rather consume by Inches, and pass through a Course of Physick, or a Sweating-Tub into the next World, than to be Well one Moment, and Dead the next: If you call this a noble End, you will be at a Loss to assign an infamous one: In short, you are Relaps'd into your first Error, and only defend it with a new-found Extravagance: The Amendment is ridiculous and impious into the Bargain.

Ariovistus saw he had spoke his Mind too frankly, before an Audience unacquainted with such libertine Principles, and therefore he very nicely confess'd he had hitherto plaid the Fool. Sir, (said he to *Eusebius*) though some abett the Doctrine I have deliver'd, yet it displeases me: I cannot close with such wild Ideas of Religion, and rather propos'd

pos'd 'em as a Jest, than a Truth: I cannot commit a Crime to save my Skin, nor even purchase Life at the Price of Murder, or Adultery; and therefore I freely grant, that those Religions that enjoyn Abominations in their *Rituals* and *Liturgies*, are out-dated, and exempted from the general Permission.

Euseb. I must own you have made a handsome Retreat; you have given a pretty Turn to a monstrous Principle; but for the future, pray remember, that to Blasphe^me in Jest, is to Sin in Earnest. All other Religions at least are Stanch, are they not? I put this Question to avoid Mistakes, for we have been to Day upon the Blunder.

Ariov. They are.

Euseb. Remember your Concession, for by and by we shall discard all the idolatrous Worships of the Old World, together with those of the New: The *Roman*, *Grecian*, and old *Assyrian* Polytheism, will no more pass Muster, than that of *Mexico*, or *Peru*. *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, *Mars*, *Juno*, and *Minerva* will be kick'd out of their Temples, as well a *Virzili putzli*. Will God be worship'd as an Eternal Being, or as a Creature? As Rational, or Irrational? As infinitely
Holy,

Holy, or as an Adulterer, Drunkard, or Murderer?

Ariovistus saw the Drift of this *Quare*, and was at a Stand for a handsome Answer; he perceiv'd himself encompass'd on all Sides, and knew not which way to evade the Danger: To say God requires to be honour'd, as a *Being infinite Holy, infinite Wise, Eternal and Independant*, was to give up the Cause without Dispute, and to acknowledge himself foil'd before the Combat: On the other Side, he durst not venture to affirm, God is content to be worship'd as a Creature, an Adulterer, or a Murderer; he thought such hideous Absurdities would grate upon the Ears of his Auditors, unaccustom'd to Blasphemies, and ill dispos'd to hear 'em without Indignation.

The Gentleman that came with him, saw his Concern, and resolv'd to disengage his Friend from the Embarras; wherefore (turning himself to *Eusebius*) the Answer (said he) to your *Quare*, in my Opinion is obvious: God requires that Worship which corresponds to the natural Knowledge we have of him; now Nature tells me, he is a Being *Eternal, Independant, infinitely Wise, and Infinitely*

nitely Holy, therefore God commands us to Adore him under this Notion.

Euseb. You have brought the Controversy to the very Point I desir'd, and have utterly defeated your Friend's System: For if God must be Ador'd as *Eternal, Independant, infinitely Wise, infinitely Holy*; had I been at *Rome* in the Reign of *Jupiter, Apollo, Mercury, &c.* I could not have believ'd nor talk'd of God as the *Romans* did; much less had it been lawful in *Egypt* to adore an *Onion, an Ox, a Crocodile, or a Hyppopotamus*; for these Creatures have no perfection, that comes near those noble Attributes of *Eternity, and Independence.*

Saturn was *Jupiter's* Father, *Juno* his Sister; so that their Nativity must fall infinitely short of *Eternity*; it's of a very fresh Date, of a late Edition, and younger than Time: They had a Father, and therefore are Dependent: Their Sanctity keeps Pace with their Eternity: *Jupiter* first welter'd in his Father's Blood, and then usurp'd his Kingdom; so that he rather deserv'd to be flung into the *Tybur* with a Cock, and a Serpent, than to be seated in the Capitol; and the *Gemonia* better suited with his Crimes, than an Altar. *Juno* was a *Miss*;
even

even to her Brother; and as infamous for Scolding, as her Incest: She deserv'd at least a House of Correction for the first Crime, and a Ducking-Stool for the Second. *Mercury* was a *Jack of all Trades*; sometimes he plaid the *Piper*, sometimes the *Sharper*; he turn'd *Post-Boy* upon Occasions, and then *Cut-Purse*: And to shew the World he could stoop to the basest Crimes, as well as the meanest Employments, he set up for a *Pimp*, a *Pander*, and *Procurer*. *Apollo* may be said better than his Father, only because he was not quite so bad: His Amours were without Number, as they were without Shame: The Heathen *Theologie* seems to have drawn in this Person, the Picture of a perfect *Beau*; for it allow'd him some Wit, more Beauty, a World of Impudence, but no Conscience. These were *Divinities* of the first *Class*; *majorum Gentium*; God's of Quality and Figure; in fine, of the *upper House*: And yet Partiality it self, would not have clear'd 'em at any Bar: I except the Right of *Ignoramus Juris*, when Crimes found Mercy, and *Innocence* Haulters. The *Egyptian* Deities *Osiris* and *Anubis* were of the same Stamp; they were neither better, nor more Ancient, than these of *Rome* and *Greece*. Now,

Now, Sir, if God Commands us to worship him as an *eternal* and *independent Being*; we can't clap in, with a *Roman, Grecian* or *Egyptian* Congregation; nay nor with any Idolatrous one, that is, or ever was in the World: For they tell us, God is a *Man*, a *Woman*, a *Snake*, a *Tree*, a *Crocodile* and a *Red-Cloath*: But its evident these poor Creatures can claim no Right to Eternity, much less to Independance; therefore had I liv'd in these blind Ages, when Serpents crawl'd upon Altars, and Monsters invaded Temples; I could not prostrate my Self before 'em; I must have protested against the Impiety, and rather have fallen by the Magistrates Hand, than have paid Obedience to his Law.

Again, God will be worship'd as *infinitely holy*: How then can you fall prostrate before an incestuous *Jupiter*, a theiving *Mercury*, a bloody *Mars*, a peevish *Juno* or a prostitute *Venus*? Such Crimes entertain no Commerce with Sanctity; their Place is Hell, not Heaven; and the Criminals rather deserve Infamy and Tortures, than Adoration. Does he adore God as *infinitely Holy*, who acknowledges him guilty

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of Incest, Murder, Felony, and even of those Offences that fright and startle Nature? That put to the Blush, not only the Modesty of the Innocent, but also the very Impudence of the Guilty? In fine that infect *Hell*, and plague the Damned?

Moreover God requires to be honour'd as a *Being infinitely Wise*; by what Rule therefore can you, with those of *Coromandel* say and believe he is an *Ape*? With the Romans, Grecians and all the other idolatrous People of the World, he is a *Man*, a *Statue*? Or with the superstitious Egyptians, he is an *Onyon*, a *Wolf*, a *Crocodile*? Some of these fantastical Deities are even void of Sense, much more of Reason; and the Men-Divinities have left Posterity no other Marks they had Reason, but their Crimes: We know they had some Wit, by the enormous Abuses of it; their Wisdom had a small Reach, it went no farther, than to lay Snares for fond Boys, or for simple Girls. Seeing therefore all the Idolatrous Worship that ever was in the World, since the Birth of Polytheism to this very Moment, clashes with those Notions under which God will be adored, you can no more joy with

with any Idolatrous Congregation, than with its Crimes. It remains therefore, that God's Permission is no more Universal, than his Command; and tho' at first you were pleas'd to extend it to all Religions except two or three, you must now turn the Tables and exclude all but two or three. So that to conclude, that great Principle, *we must conform to the Religions of those Countries where we live*, is not only notoriously false, but also Scandalous to Extravagance.

Ariov. You fancy I am run a Ground, and that you have wounded my Principle beyond Recovery: But stay: You have been upon the Ramble, and mistaken your Way: You reason upon a false Bottom; for you suppose Heathens worshipt Creatures, and paid Homage to Statues; whereas most certainly they ador'd the true God under those sensible Resemblances; nor can you reasonably presume they worshipt *Men, Statues or Beasts* unless you suppose 'em Fools, to make 'em impious. I might then with a safe Conscience adore *Jupiter, Apollo and Venus at Rome*; and wou'd now (were I in the *Indies*) bend before *Ram*, or in *Japan* before *Zacas*: For these

Visible Objects are but dark Emblems, or different Names of *God blessed for evermore*. Though therefore God Commands me to adore him, as *eternal, independent, infinitely Holy, and infinitely Wise*; he has not determin'd under what Name: Tho' we call him *Jupiter, Mars* or *Apollo*, he Scorns to formalize: If *Ram, Zacas* or *Amidas* he will not pet: A great Name adds not a Grain to his Perfections, nor can a vulgar Appellation diminish them. In fine Reason teaches us his Nature, but his Name we learn from Custom; and this will vary till you bring all Languages to their primitive Unity: So that, methinks, you have all this while skirmisht with a Shadow, or fenc't with a *Nothing*: You have rais'd a sottish Idolatry in your Brain, meerly to destroy it: But great Wits often mistake the Question, as well as great Blockheads: Like ill bred Spaniels they run at Check on a false Sent; flush their own Fancies for their Adversaries Opinion; and cry *Victory* when they have handsomely lasht their own Errors.

Euseb. Because just now I put you in Mind of some Mistakes, and censured severely a Vein of Shuffling that runs thro'

thro' all your Discourse, you very fairly cruize for Reprizals, and wou'd fain bring me in *Guilty* of the same Oversight, I have legally prov'd upon you: Believe me, Sir, I have not caper'd in the Air. I aim'd at your *Principle* and have hit it; and you are sensible enough I am come up to the very Point in Debate; and so start a new Question, either to entangle me, or to delude the Audience. But I intend not to wade far in this Controversy, *whether the Pagans adored the true God under the Shape of Jupiter, Apollo, &c.* Doctor Stillin. maintain'd they did, but all impartial Men wish he had employ'd his Talents on a more defensible Subject; for certainly his Reputation suffer'd in the Enterprize, and he had shew'd more Judgment in Stepping over so nice a Point, than he did Wit, in treating it so little to the Purpose.

However because you have flung this Difficulty in my Way, I must take some Notice of it; not that the Issue of our present Dispute depends on the Decision, of this Question; but because I am resolv'd to give you full Satisfaction. I say then; *That the Heathens did not adore the true God, under the Names of Jupiter,*
K 3 Mars,

Mars, Apollo, &c. and this is so manifest a Truth, that a Man must shut his Eyes to overlook it: *Dij non fuerunt ab aeterno, sed ita eorum quisquis natus est ut nos nascimur.* Your Gods (says Athenagoras to the Gentils) are not eternal, they were all born, as we are: And Min. Felix laughs at the Pagans for adoring those as Gods, who were born and died like Men: *Manifestum est homines illos fuisse, quos & natos legimus, & mortuos Scimus.* St. Cyprian de Idol. Van. proves they were not Gods, because they had been Kings. *Deos non esse, quos colit Vulgus, hinc notum est: Reges enim fuerunt:* And when some Gentils (to delude those Christian Arguments they could not answer) had the Impudence to deny they worshipt any Man, Arnobius confutes their wretched Evasion, and proves home upon 'em, they really adored Men tho' they blusht to own the folly lib. 11, cont. Gent. *Vos hominem nullum colitis? non unum vel alium? non innumeros alios? quin imo non omnes, quos in templis Vestris mortalium sustulistis ex numero, & calo sideribusque donastis? Et infra Jam profecto discetis quibus singuli patribus, quibus matribus fuerint procreati; qua in regione nati, qua gente, qua fecerint, egerint,*
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pertulerint. But to put an End to the Controversy; take a Turn to the Capitol, and you will see what Opinion the Pagans had of Jupiter, *qui ejus nutricem in Capitolio posuerunt*, who placed his very Nurse, Wife, Sister, and Daughter in this august Temple. I might here bring a Cloud of Witnesses, who liv'd and convers'd with Heathens, who studied their prophane Theology to confute it; who were Men of Learning and Probi-ty, and never calumniated an Adversary to oppress him; But what I have said suffices to convince a rational Man, that the Pagans adored Creatures, not the Creator under borrow'd Names as you pretend.

Ariov. Indeed the Vulgar might possibly mistake the Fables of *Homer* for Articles of Religion; and model their Faith by Ballads: They might divide God into Sex, and Worship Men and Women before Statues their Representatives; but you must grant this gross Impiety concern'd only the Rabble; the Philosophers and leading Men were above such an Absurdity.

Euseb. No doubt the Philosophers Condemn'd in their Hearts those very Deities they ador'd; but their Practice

varied from their Judgment, and tho' they were Theists in the Schools, they were Polytheists in the Temples. God was not worshipt according to the Ideas of Philosophers, but of Poets. *Quid sibi vult ista non poetica sed inimica plane Varietas, Deos secundum Philosophos in libris querere, secundum poetas in templis adorare. Aug. lib 2 de Consen. Evan. Cap. 23.* And if you doubt of this, I must desire you once more in St. Austin's Name to enter into the Capitol; this was the Seat of Jupiter O. M. *id est* of Rome's supream God. Here you will find *Amalthea* a Goat, who nurs'd this Deity; his Sister, Wife and Daughter; evident Arguments the Romans thought he was a Man to whom they paid supreme Honour: For if they thought he was eternal, why gave they him a Nurse? If independent, why did they confess he ow'd his Preservation to Goats Milk? And then: If he were not a Man, what did he with a Wife? Or how came he by a Daughter? Do not tell me, these are Poetical Inventions; I know they are: But these Fables were expos'd by the Heathen Divines, and cull'd out of *Poems* to piece up Religion; they were absurd, its true, yet believ'd by some,
and

and reverenc'd by all. In fine if Poets invented 'em the Priests adopted 'em; they were convey'd from the Stage to the Temple by Blindness and Superstition, and what Men laught at in one Place they adored in the other. *Nunquid & Capitolia Romanorum opera sunt Poetarum? August. Lib. 6. de Ci. Dei.*

But if we suppose against Scripture, against the Authority of Pagans themselves, and the concurrent Testimonies of Ages; that the Heathens did adore the supream God *Blessed for evermore*; this will not better your Cause, nor prejudice mine: For still, its as clear as plain Fact can make a Thing, that when they worshipt him under the Shape of *Jupiter*, they clapt upon his infinite Sanctity *Rapes* and *Adulteries*: They impeacht him of Roberies under the Notion of *Mercury*, of Cruelty under that of *Mars*, &c. Nay they stript him of all Wisdom under the Figures of Beasts, and even of Sense under those of *Onyons*, *Fire* and *Water*. If therefore we are obliged to adore God as a *Being eternal, independent, infinitely holy and infinitely Wise*; you could not believe, nor worship God, as the old Heathens did, nor can you go over to any Pagan So-

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ciety that now 'is, either in the *East* or *West Indies*: For tho' they do worship the true and invisible God, under visible and material Images, yet they charge him with a thousand Impertinencies, destructive to those Notions under which he commands Worship. So that we must reform your *Thesis*, and dash out of the universal Permission, not only two or three, but two or three thousand Religions establisht in the World by Custom, and maintain'd by all the Supports of Force and Authority: For they outrage Nature, and burlesque God's most sacred Attributes; they rifle his Majesty, entrench upon his Wisdom, asperse his Sanctity, and turn his very Being into Farce and Raillery.

Ariovistus was at a *Nonplus*, and his Concern flew to his Face: Nay, his usual Confidence withdrew, and even Raillery the last Defence of Libertines deserted him; so that he made a Figure worthy of laughter and compassion: At last, he resolv'd to gain Time for Reflection, and therefore addressing himself to the Lady; Madam (said he) I have almost talk'd my self out of breath, an Hours respite will not be unseason-

unseasonable; with your leave, we will put off the Conclusion till the Evening.

Upon Condition (answer'd the Lady) you'll return to the Conference, or condemn your Principles.

Ariov. I'll be bound for my Appearance, or if you ask better Security, my Friend I presume, will give in Bail for my Forth-coming: Then turning himself to *Eusebius*; we are (continu'd he) in the Pit, and must fight it out: There is no place left for Retreat. Leaving the Company he walk'd into the Garden, rather to conceal his *Chagrin*, than to take the Air: And indeed I wonder not at his Concern; for it's observ'd, that tho' Libertines hate Conscience, they are fond of Honour; they are Creatures made up of Pride and Arrogance, and therefore neither know how to bear an Advantage with Moderation, nor a Disappointment with Patience.

When he was gone: I am surpris'd (said the Lady) at the Gentleman's Confidence; surely his Assurance weighs more than his Judgment; why else will he bring his Cause to another Hearing? I love not to laugh at another Man's
Mis-

Misfortune, nor to draw Pleasure from his Confusion: But, me thinks, I can't be sorry to see Irreligion punish'd in its grand Protector: Humiliations work more on a Libertine's Understanding, than Demonstration; and those that can't be argu'd out of loose Principles, are sometimes sham'd out of 'em.

Were the Vertue of *Ariovistus* equal to his Wit (said his Friend) nothing could be more Accomplish'd than he; but I must own, his Morals are bad, and his Principles worse: He laughs at the Difference between *Good* and *Evil*: And I have heard him say, *No Sin is blacker, than the very Thinking there is any*: Nay; he defines Sin, a Thing that some live by inveighing against, and others by practicing. And hence it is, that he, not only makes a Practice, but a Boast of Sin, and defends it with as much Greediness as he commits it.

Euseb. But Sir, tho' such Men carry off the Reputation of Wit, they have too little of the Man, to be the Standard of Mankind: We are not (God be thank'd) Fools enough to take Scoffs for Arguments, not Raillery for Reason: He is a great *Ignoramus*, who knows not that it's easier to sport with Vertue,

true, than to practise it: Indeed, if *Ariovistus* could jest Sin into *Nothing*, his Mirth would not be unreasonable: But the wild Humour of a Debauchee, cannot work upon the Nature of things: Wit may dive into Essences, but not transmute 'em. However, I hope to reason the Gentleman out of Conceit both of his Wit and Religion, and to persuade him that those are Fools, who sport themselves into Hell; and that none more certainly do so, than those who make a Jest of Sin, and a *Pagent* of Religion: For tho' a Man who dares defie God, and look Damnation in the Face, may be Witty, I am sure he is superlatively Foolish. *Eudoxus* was no less mortify'd than *Ariovistus*. He was not indeed concern'd at his disgrace; no, he rather felt Symptoms of Indignation than of Pity; and wish'd he had defended his *Post* with greater Bravery, or render'd it with more Ignominy: For having been deluded by *Ariovistus*, he thought the Weakness of his Defence would glance upon his own Reputation, and that the World would tax him of Levity, or Simplicity, for embracing Latitudinarianism upon so weak Grounds. One wou'd swear, said he in a Passion, these

these Men by their Talk had engross'd all the Wit of the Nation, as well as the Vices; yet bring 'em to the Touchstone, and you'll find nothing but Dross; they argue as ill as they believe, and are as great strangers to Reason, as to Vertue; they Dispute no more methodically than they live, and are as weak in Principle, as violent in Passion. *Eudoxus* was going on, when Dinner put an end to his Invective. *Ariovistus* had not walk'd away his Resentment, he brought it to Table, and even discover'd it by endeavouring to conceal it: He run up Pleasantry to affection, and made himself ridiculous, not to appear in a Passion: So that the Lady told him with a Smile, *He was merry out of Vexation*; but *Ariovistus* let the Compliment fall, thinking it the best way, to connive at a petty Affront he durst not revenge; and so they enter'd upon a Conversation of indifferent Subjects.

D I A L O G U E XII.

*Ariovistus is forc'd to confess, that one
only Religion is Saving.*

THE Lady invited the Company into the Garden after Dinner: She was impatient to see the Issue of the Dispute, which she hop'd wou'd prove disadvantageous to *Ariovistus*: Nay, the morning's Success had not only alaid her Fears, but even given her an Assurance, that Truth would triumph over Falsity, and Religion over Impiety; besides she flatter'd herself, her Son would profit by *Ariovistus's* Misfortune, and desert those Tenets his Master was not able to defend; for he was dissatisfy'd with the morning's Performance, and the Abilities of *Ariovistus* came not up to his Expectation: He saw him always upon the Retreat, and that he rather shuff'd than argu'd; he scarce durst look an Argument in in the Face; and tho' he sometimes fenc'd off Blows, he never gave any: In fine, he turn'd short upon himself, and generally confuted one Reply by the contrariety

trariety of the other; so that *Eudoxus* suspected the Cause of *Ariovistus* was no better than the Defence of it, and that he pleaded it, because it was destitute of Reason.

After a Turn or two in the Garden, the Lady leading the Company into an *Arbor*; me thinks (said she to *Ariovistus*) this Place was made for Conversation; we have both Time and Convenience to give a second Hearing: You are I am sure a Gentleman of your Word.

Ariov. Madam, I desire nothing more: Let us then continu'd, he turning himself to *Eusebius*, begin where we broke off this Morning: Be pleas'd Sir to remember, I cast before you a Scheme of those Religions that are *A-la-mode* among our young Town-Sparks. Some are so amazingly Irreligious, as to turn Religion into a Trick of State; they say it's a Slave to Government, and cannot oblige till it pass into Law, but then it's Binding, though never so Execrable.

Others retrench from this Command, these Religions that welter in Blood, and flame with Prostitution: Such Religions, they say, are fram'd for *Cyclops*, and calculated for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*:

A Man must turn a Lyon, or Baboon, to practice the Duties of such Churches, and a Devil to command 'em: Wherefore they stigmatize the Believers of such scandalous Tenets, and throw both the *Credenda*, and *Agenda* out of the Pale of God's Permission: But then, a few excepted, all others, they say, are allow'd of; a good Intention rectifies their Errors, and even compounds for Idolatry its self; it perswades God to wink at Impiety; and to take Affronts for Veneration. This is, no doubt, to trespass upon his Goodness, to make bold with his Greatness, and to treat his Majesty with Scorn and Contempt.

The Company smil'd, and admir'd no less the Gentleman's Confidence, than the Contrivance; by this little Artifice he very handsomly heav'd the Shame of the Defeat from himself to those young Sparks, whose *Perswasion* he pretended to defend: But the Imposture lay too open to trapan the Company, for he disputed not as *Second*, but as *Principle*, and pleaded his own Cause, not others: But those Men are above the Niceties of Honour, or Punctilio's of Conscience.

Eusebius knew not well how to model his Countenance, he was both tempted to laugh, and to frown; for the Turn was witty, tho' impudent. At last; Sir, said he to *Ariovistus*, I thought you had undertaken the Defence of your own Religion, not of *John an Oakes*; I love not to encounter *Representatives*, nor to engage with *Corporations* by proxy. However, I am glad you have chang'd Sides, and left the *Post* of an *Advocate* for that of an *Accuser*; we have at least made some Progress: For now it's agreed on, that in spite of Mr. *Hobbs* and his Profelytes, the Laws of Commonwealth must not be the Standard of our Faith; that God permits not (much less commands us) to convene with those Congregations in Religion, that countenance Impieties; in fine, that Idolatry invades God's Right, strikes at his Prerogative, and draws upon his very Person: So that in Conclusion, those Religions that are permitted, take up but little Room, and may be cast up without the help of *Arithmetick*: Now Sir, favour us with a Draught of your Tenets.

Ariov.

Ariov. With all my Heart, I neither blush to acknowledge my Religion, nor fear to defend it: It's upright in its Principles, and reasonable in the Application: It's fitted for all Capacities; the Peasant comprehends it, and the Philosopher admires it: In a word, my Religion is, what Men call *Natural*: It's of the same Date with our Nature, and came into the World with *Adam*: God printed every Article of it in our Hearts, before the Invention of the *Press*, and it's propagated by Generation: We carry our Gospel and Prophecies within us, which can neither be corrupted by Malice, Ignorance, or Inadvertency. Our *Creed* is plain, and our *Decalogue* short, but comprehensive. *We believe a God, Maker of Heaven and Earth; a God that punishes Vices, and rewards Vertue, he requires no Sacrifice but of our Hearts, no Respect, but Awe of his Grandure, and Obedience to his Commands; nor does his Law put any Precept upon us but this, Do as you would be done by.*

This Religion is *Universal*: It's neither confin'd to Time, nor Place: It takes in all Ages, and runs thro' all Climats: It obliges the most incult Nations of the World, together with the
most

most Polite ; and because all know its Precepts, no Man is exempted from their Obedience : Yet it permits those Rites and Ceremonies though vain and superstitious, which clash not with the above-mention'd Tenets : But the very Moment a Religion coins an Article, opposite to the Belief of a God, or contrary to the grand Attributes of his Sanctity, Wisdom, Justice, or Mercy ; when it refuses to this all-powerful Being an Acknowledgment of Dependence, and withal reverses this great Law of Nature, *Quod tibi non vis fieri alteri ne feceris* ; I say the Moment a Religion falls into such bare-fac'd Impieties, it becomes sacrilegious and abominable : And for this reason, I extend God's Permission to Three only Religions, the *Christian*, *Jewish*, and *Mahometan* ; for these alone stand upon the Law of Nature ; they instill most excellent Principles, and regulate our Duty to God, and our Obligation to Men.

Euseb. Do you speak your own Thoughts ? I put the Question for a Caution against Mistakes, for we have play'd away the Morning at cross Questions.

Ariov.

Ariov. It's my Opinion, and will stand the most severe Test of Reason; Nothing material can possibly be brought against it.

Euseb. For all that, I hope to banish two of the three Religions out of the Permission; nay, and force you to confess there are no more Religions than Gods. A Man, you say, may commence a Jew, when he has taken the Pet at Christianity, and change Baptism for Circumcision; and when he has taken a Surfeit of the Thalmud, he may piously strike off to *Mecha*, and truck the *Pen-tateuch* for the *Alcoran*.

Ariov. He may.

Euseb. With a safe Conscience, therefore in *England* we may believe *Christ* is the true *Messias*, born of a Virgin, true God, and true Man; who dy'd for our Sins, and was butcher'd by our Malice: But when we have given up our Names to a Rabbin, and are Adopted into one of the Tribes, we may change Language, and as safely protest the *Messias* is yet to come; that *Christ* is a meer Man, nothing different from others, but that he was more Criminal; that he dy'd for his own Offences, not for ours; that Justice took him off, not
Envy:

Envy: We may believe these Tenets, and swear to the Truth of every Title. The Christian engages God's Authority for the Truth of his *Creed*, the Jew takes the same Liberty; yet one Side jars with the other. Here is a down-right Contradiction, nor can all the Artifice of Logick, all the Power of the Almighty, reconcile both Sides. If the Christian be in the Right, the Jew is in the Wrong; and if Truth stands for the Jew, it must of Necessity abandon the Christian.

Ariov. You have Reason, but because I know not which Side Truth favours, I may joyn with either.

Euseb. Supposing your Pretensions grounded, you cannot take both Sides: For tho' you are ignorant with which Party Truth sides, you are sure it can't stand for both: So that tho' in your Hypothesis you may either be Jew, or Christian, you can't be both successively: If you swear to the Christian Symbol to day, and to the Jewish to morrow, you are perjur'd beyond all peradventure; for you know the Tenets of these two Churches don't nick like *Tallies*.

But

But this is not all (continu'd *Eusebius*) if God permits me to take up with the Brethren of the Circumcision, he permits me to refuse Worship to *Jesus Christ* ; nay, to Blaspheme him. If I may turn off to the Christians, he permits me to adore him. Now either he is God, or he is not : If the Second, I must not adore him, for tho' God be Master of his Favours, he is not of his Honour, he can't make this over to any Creature by a Deed of Gift, or Conveyance ; tho' he be Eternal, like a *Minor* he can't alienate the Title : But again if Christ be God, certainly he requires Adoration as an indispensable Duty, and if we fail to discharge our selves of the Obligation, God will not fail to punish our Neglect.

Moreover, God can't, you say, permit these Offences that Nature condemns : His Prerogative Royal reaches not so far : Now what can intrench more upon Nature, than to invest a Creature with the Title to a Worship, which God alone can claim Right to ? Than to withdraw my Allegiance from the Creator of all Things, and bow to my Fellow Creature ; Yet God permits Christianity on the one Side ; and on the other ;

other, it's flat Idolatry to adore Christ if he be only Man; therefore if Christ be only Man, God permits Idolatry, *id est*, a Sin of the highest Malice against the very first Principle of Nature: It's then as evident that one of these Religions is forbid, as that one is meer Practice and Imposture; and it's as manifest, that one is Practice and Imposture, as that both Members of a Contradiction can't possibly be True.

Ariov. Were I sure that Christ was God, I should lie under an indispensable Obligation of adoring him; I must then adhere to Christianity; and if Occasion requir'd, sign my Faith with my Blood: And were I sure he was Man alone, I ought to wheel off from the Church to a *Synagogue*, and exchange the Gospel for the *Thalmud*: But I am in the Dark, I rove in Obscurity, and cannot determine for which Religion Truth stands: In this Uncertainty God permits me to clap in with either; my Ignorance justifies his Permission, and my Choice; and though by refusing to adore Christ, I may not do him Right, Ignorance hinders me from doing him Wrong: Thus tho' the Jews deprive him of his Due, if he be God; and the Christians

Christians give more than his Due, if he be not; yet their Sin can be only *Material, that is*, without Malice, and consequently without Offence; seeing neither Religion is impious in its Worship, and both excellent in their Precepts of Morality, it's clear we may follow either.

Euseb. Never did Men talk more of Religion than we, and never had Men less. To level Judaism with Christianity, even in a Christian, nay a reform'd Kingdom, is one of the most monstrous Attempts that ever I heard of: The very Thought of so bold a Blasphemy almost casts me into an *Agony*, and makes me sweat with Disgust: This is to raise a *Cross* for our blessed Redeemer in *Christendom*, as the Jews did in *Jerusalem*, to play upon his Goodness, to revile his Greatness, and to salute him with a *Crucifige*: But what will not Men do to support a dying Cause, who have Nothing left, but *Will* and *Forehead*? Your Religion, Sir, is not Calculated up for 1700, but for 1642, or thereabouts, when the ten Commandments were only Authentick during *Pleasure*, when the four *Evangelists* were upon their *Behaviour*, with a *quamdiu se bene gesserint*, and a *nemine contradicente*, not the Bible, govern'd

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vern'd the Pulpit: In fine, your very Defence of Religion strikes at Religion, and whilst you approve either, you fairly condemn both; for you pretend both the Jewish and Christian Religion are permitted, because you doubt of both; and know not on which Side Truth stands: Now supposing you are in such Circumstances, it's evident you can't in Conscience embrace either; for which Side soever you take, you fear you are in the Wrong: Now whosoever squares his Actions by a dubious Dictamen of Conscience, is certainly guilty of a *formal Sin*, tho' otherwise the Objects are not only *Lawful*, but *Laudable*. This is an unquestionable Principle in Morals, and can only be deny'd by those who make no Difference between *Good* and *Evil*. If therefore you adore Christ with the Christian, and at the same time doubt of his Divinity, you offend God in the very Act of Worship: You are a kind of a Pagan, tho' no Idolater. On the other Side, if you blaspheme him with the Jew, if you strip him of his divine Nature, if you herd him with the accursed Crew of Hypocrites, and Impostors, and at the same time suspect he is more than a Man, tho' the Doubt
may

may perchance diminish the Sin, it cannot possibly excuse it.

Ariov. This is pretty. Must I then like old *Erasmus* dangle in the Air between both Churches? Or if I doubt of all Religions, must I profess none? Certainly Sir, you mistake your Errand: Whilst you pull down Latitudinarianism, you very fairly set up Atheism; and least all Religions should be saving you disallow of all. I would set out at *Jordan*, and take my Progress from one Religion to an other, I would let any Man write upon me *Turk, Jew, Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent*, or what Perswasion you please rather than an *Atheist*. In fine it's more Orthodox to profess any Religion than none.

Euseb. Under Favour, I would no more persuade you to condemn all Religions than to approve all. I know there is a true Religion, and I am sure there is but one. Nay I am confident, that the Christian Religion carries so many visible Marks of divine Revelation about it, that a Man, who will bring Things to a sober Examen, must confess it came from Heaven, and that he who turns Christianity into a Fable, or the Doctrine of the Bible into Illusion, deserves

either to be begg'd for a Fool, or to be stigmatiz'd for a Blasphemer. But if you waver with Doubts and fluctuate between the *Synagogue* and the *Church*, without being able certainly to determine in which Truth is preach'd, in which Imposture; rouse up your Reason bring both to the Bar, hear their Pretensions, examen the Motives of Credibility, and in fine sum up the Evidence, and if you do this impartially, you'll soon either be a Madman, or a Christian.

Ariov. But, if after I have heard the Witnesses, and weigh'd the Evidence on both Sides with Deliberation, Maturity, and Impartiality; if, I say, after these ceremonial Preliminaries, I remain ambiguous, must I neither convene with the Jew, nor the Christian?

Euseb. With neither, if this strange Case should happen; I say *should happen*, for in Reality it cannot; the Motives of Christianity are so many, and so convincing, that unless we shut our Eyes, and hood-wink Reason, they'll force us to acknowledge that if it be not evidently true, its at least evidently Credible; and when once you are come up to this Certainty, then you are oblig'd

blig'd to declare for Christianity, to believe its Tenets, and practise its Morals.

Ariov. Tho' Christianity compar'd with Judaism may seem *Credible*, perchance it may seem *Incredible*, if compar'd with some other Religion, that has never appear'd on our Horizon: For as there are *Terra incognita*, unknown Regions, so there are undiscover'd Religions. Must I therefore take my leave of *old England*? Trudge to Sea? and encompass the World with *Sir Francis Drake*, before I pitch upon a Religion? Or must I at least rig out a Vessel of Intelligence? And then work upon those Materials the Captain or Mate bring home? This is a Work both tedious, and expensive, nay, I may add, endless, and foolish; and he that can persuade himself God requires such a Puzzling and so Impossible a Scrutiny, must confess the wise Maker of all Things, intended rather to be laught at by Men, than worshipt.

Euseb. Keep at home; God neither commands you to ship for *Africa*, or *America*, nor to run in Quest after the Fables of the *Brachmans*, or the Superstitions of the *Bonzies*. A Religion that

is evidently credible in *England*, is so all the World over, with what Sect soever you compare it : For neither God's Goodness, nor Wisdom can permit, that a false Religion be equally Credible with the true one ; much less can he permit it to be *more Credible*, and least of all, to be evidently *Credible* : If therefore after a sober Examen, you find such an Appearance of Truth in the Christian Religion, that you cannot doubt of it without Imprudence and Rashness, you may conclude without comparing it with any other, that you are oblig'd to adhere to it, as Reveal'd by God ; and if you refuse to believe his supreme Veracity (when you cannot without a high Imprudence doubt, but he speaks) you must expect to pay for the Contempt, by groaning eternally under the Weight of his Indignation. Dash therefore out of the *Patent*, one of these two Religions, and I counsel you (out of Respect to the Baptism you have receiv'd, and the Kingdom you live in) rather to give up Judaism, than Christianity ; and after all, Sir, Circumcision is painful, and our *English* Constitution will not bear the Operation.

Ariov. Take your Course; we have been upon Duty a great while, and I am willing to come to an Agreement upon any Terms.

Euseb. To an End, you mean, of the Dispute; for we can no more agree than Light and Darkness, than Truth and Falshood, than Libertinism, and Religion. The present Question is, whether a Man may in Conscience conform to the *Alcoran* in *Constantinople*, and to the Gospel in *Christendom*. Pray what Opinion have you of the *Alcoran*? Was it compil'd by divine Inspiration, or Imposture? By a Prophet, or a Cheat? By the Impulse of the holy Ghost, or the Suggestion of Lewdness, and Ambition?

Ariov. Every Tittle breaths Nonsense, Impiety, or Blasphemy: It puts almost the very Alphabet out of Countenance; and infects the Paper it's writ on. A Man must commence *Fool*, before he can impose upon his Reason those forgeries for Revelations; and turn Beast to Practise the Morals.

Euseb. Enough: Why so much Heat? So much Invective against a Religion that comes within the Verge of Permission? If tollerated, it deserves Re-

spect ; if not, why do you defend it ? It's Ridiculous to damn the Alcoran, and canonize the Doctrine : To censure *Mahomet*, and approve Mahometism.

But, pray Sir, if the *Alcoran* favours Lewdness, and lets loose Sensuality ; if it draws upon Modesty, and tilts at Reason ; if it gorges with Impiety, and smells of Blasphemy ; how can you put on the Turban, and herd with the Musselmens ? For when you jump over the Pale of Christianity, and give up your Name to the *Cady*, or *Musty*, you must take up for Truths these Fables, you now brand with Forgery and Imposture ; you must change the Key to another Tune, you must revere at *Constantinople* what you laugh at in *London*, and bow to what you ridicule ; you must say and believe, Untruths is the Language of Heaven, blasphemy the Dictates of the *holy Ghost*, Murders, Lewdness and Rapines, the Commands of a meek, holy, and just Deity ; for the Turks take all the Alcoran for Revelation and Precept : Now to say God has Reveal'd some Things that clash with Truth, others that check Reason, and others again that overshoot Extravagance ;

gance; that he commands some Things that discountenance Vertue, and encourage Libertinism; is to strike at all his Attributes, and to make at his very Person; it's to frame a more vile Idea of his Divinity, than the very Laplanders: For theirs is only Ridiculous, whilst yours is Sacrilegious and Execrable.

Ariov. Were I at *Constantinople*, I would speak like the Musty, and do like a Musselman, but then in my Closet I would laugh at their Folly, and pity their Blindness; though my Tongue conform'd to the establish'd Religion, my Heart should be a *Recusant*: This should adore God in Spirit and Truth, tho' my Tongue and outward Man worship'd him with Blasphemies, and serv'd him in Sensuality: All Exterior Actions are to be rated by the Interior, this is their proper Standard; if the Intention be Sterling, they cannot possibly be Counterfeit.

Euseb. Ho! We are just where we set out: Now all Religions are permitted again.

Ariov. Why so?

Euseb. If the Intention can sanctify *Hypocrisy*, and the most outrageous Blasphemies, why may it not convey Piety into Murders? And Holiness into the impure *Saboths* of *Venus* and *Pryapus*? Why can't it blanch over the Horror of the *Mexicans* human Sacrifices? Or the Cruelty of the *Punick* burning Statues of *Saturn*? You may, you say, at *Constantinople* expose Christianity to the Scorn and Petulancy of Infidels; give up the *Bible* to Turks and Barbarians; impeach Christians of Apostacy, and make Impudence and Inspiration speak the same Language: If a good Intention can justify at *Constantinople* such a Catalogue of black Impieties, why may it not authorise less Crimes in other places? Return boldly to your first *Thesis*; exclude no Religion out of the Act of Indulgence; place Vertue and Vice on the same Level; pull down the Boundaries between Good and Evil; take off the Restraint of Conscience, and blend Men and Beasts into one *Species*. Come, Sir, pluck up a good Heart; cast the *Die*, and pass the *Rubicon* of Honour and Conscience, our Dispute will otherwise be at an end; for we have cast out the *Thalmud* as Apocryphal; you have
discard-

discarded the Alcoran; so that the Gospel only stands untouch'd, and God's Permission is confin'd to Christianity alone.

Ariovistus found himself in the Toyl, and knew not which Way to unhamper himself; his Concern flew to his Face, and every Posture betray'd an extreme Passion; he seem'd to brood some desperate Resolution, and only wanted Boldness to execute it: After a short Strife between Shame and Revenge; I perceive, said he to *Eusebius*, you take Advantage of my Condescension, and even turn my Civility against me; you manage a Favour so ungentilely, that I shall stand off in Caution and Reservedness for the future.

Euseb. Explain your Meaning, I suppose in Disputes, Reason must take place of Ceremony, and that a Man may press an Argument home without trespassing upon good Breeding: To be plain, I am more beholding to my Arguments, than to your Liberality; you have condescended to me, as *Boufflers* did to *K. Williams*, when he could hold out no longer: In a Word, I have not courted, but storm'd you into those Concessions you blush at.

Ariov.

Ariov. Hold there; I laid the Alcoran at your Mercy without Necessity, and attacht it of Imposture, Fallacy, and Blasphemy, out of an Excess of good Nature, and Complaisance.

Euseb. Out of good Nature and Complaisance?

Ariov. Yes; for among Friends, it carries an Air of Truth, and the unlimited Extent of that Perswasion pleads home for the Divinity of its Author.

Euseb. Ho! ho! we have Turks in England: I thought the Ottoman Religion reach'd no further than the Ottoman Sword; but I perceive it has swum over into our Island. Pray, continu'd he with a Smile, what is your Turkish Appellation? *Solyman*? or *Achmet*? But Raillery a part; had I been upon the Pinch, I would have dropt the Turk, and kept the Christian: For a Christian Turk is a frank Atheist *once remov'd*, and tho' he makes Profession of a God, and of a Religion most Men conclude, he believes neither. Indeed by this unexpected Declaration, you have disappointed me; I intended to prove, that *one only* Religion was Saving, and that all others were cast out of

of the *Act for Toleration*: But you have made clever Work of it, and discarded all Religions, nay, and, I Fancy, Salvation too.

Ariov. With Permission, Sir, tho' I approve the *Alcoran*, I may reverence the Gospel: And tho' I unlock Heaven-Gate to Musselmén, why must I shut it upon Christians?

Euseb. Why? One runs quite counter to the other, even in the most essential Points, both of Belief and Practice. Christian Religion tells us, Christ is God; the Mahometan, that he is not: That commands us to adore him: This forbids us: Now Sir, if Truth favours the Turks, Christ is a meer Creature; and by Consequence all Christians are downright Idolaters: If therefore God will be ador'd as a Being *Eternal*, infinitely *Wise*, and infinitely *Holy*; It's evident, you (who discover Truth on every Title of the *Alcoran*) cannot with a safe Conscience profess Christianity; for that great Oracle tells us, Christ is a Creature; and therefore, so soon as you commence Christian, you pay divine Honour to a Man, known, and acknowledg'd such: Now to adore God, as a Man, is not to worship him as a Being

ing *Eternal*, infinitely *Wise*, and infinitely *Holy*: And to Adore a Man, as God, is to strip the Almighty of all his Privileges, to rifle the Sanctuary, and to lay the consecrated Treasures at the Feet of a Creature: Here is flat Idolatry on the one Hand, and a Monster compos'd of Idolatry and Sacrilege on the other. So that to Sum up the Evidence, if Turcism be a true and allow'd Religion, Christianity is not; and so my Thesis is prov'd; that one Religion alone is Saving: Which glorious Quality to the Shame of Latitudinarianism, and the Scandal of Reason, you clap on Mahometism.

The Lady over-joy'd at the Defeat of *Ariovistus* was not Mistress of her Transport: These Gentlemen, said she, are for ensuring Causes, and never speak under Demonstration: Then turning to him, Sir, (continu'd she) I pity your Malice; but am glad of your Overthrow: You have been more at Variance with your self, than with your Adversary, and seldom recall'd one Absurdity, without advancing a greater; but at length, in Defiance of Sense, and Reason, you have out-shot Extravagance it self, and seal'd a Million of Impertinencies with a daring Blasphemy: For you have
rais'd

rais'd up Mahometism upon the Ruins of Christianity, and sunk our blessed Saviour into an Impostor, to swell Mahomet into a Prophet. I counsel you to ship for *Asia* in our *Smirna* Fleet, for our *English* Climat is mortal to a Turkish Constitution: These Animals can no more live here, than Toads or Spiders in *Ireland*: Our *English* Charity embraces all Men, besides Papists and Musselmen: Those have too much Religion for a reform'd Nation, and these too little.

This Picquant Irony gall'd *Ariovistus* to the Quick; Patience abandon'd him, and Passion ran away with his Judgment: So that at length he broke thro' all the Bounds even of Respect, and Reason: Madam, said he, I perceive you are surpriz'd at my Doctrine: Out of Respect to your Ladyship, I freely condemn the Alcoran as Practice and Imposture: But then, give me leave to put the Gospel in the *Indice* also: They were both hammer'd on the same Anvil; this to hagg Men with Fears, the others to divert 'em with pleasing Prospects of sensual *Elisums*: We have been *Hob-goblin'd* too long into Religion; but, God be thank'd, the Vizard is
torn

torn off, and the Cheat is unmask'd, and now we dare play with those Monsters, we once trembled at: We enter upon the Stage of this World-like Beasts, and make as inglorious an *Exit*: Our Lives and Souls smoak into Nothing: We were flung upon the Earth, as the *Leviathan* was in the *Deep* to play; seeing therefore our Days are few, it's Prudence to live apace: *Good* and *Evil* are words *ad placitum*, invented by some, to impose on others.

He was going on when *Eusebius* put a stop to his Impudence: I suspected (says he) you acted hitherto in Masquerade; I am glad the Vizard is fallen off, and that the Monster appears in it's own Shape: Men of your Principles should be coop'd up in Pest-Houses, their very Breath shoots Contagion, and their Conversation is Mortal. Your Atheistical Club has made Religion cheap, and Morality shameful: It has preach'd a considerable Part of the Nation out of Sobriety, and Principles too: It teaches young Gentlemen to Swear and Blaspheme, before they know the Malice of the Sins; and then when Age opens their Eyes, they rather part with their Innocence, than Prophaneness. Thus
you

you espouse 'em to Wickedness, before they are able to commit it: But the Misery is, that those who curse God in their Youth, in good time will defie him; and others who transgress the Decalogue at ten, will laugh at it before twenty: Boldness grows upon us with Age, and all the Terrors of Conscience decline; they faint under the Weight of reiterated Crimes, and lose their *Emphasis*; and then when once we are got out of the Reach of this importune Cenfor, we shall swallow down your accursed Principles, not only without Reluctance, but even with Pleasure: We shall not only countenance Atheism, but profess it; and easily perswade our selves we die like Beasts, to live like 'em.

I know you are no more able to defend your Morals, than your Faith; and I wou'd rather detest, than confute 'em, were I not acquainted with the Latitudinarian Impudence: You vent such hideous Tenets, that they amaze Christians, and rather raise their Indignation, than call for a Confutation; like Puddles they cannot be stir'd without Infection, and like Plague-Sores they endanger the Surgeon: Now because good
Men

Men sometimes think it more expedient to confute those Impieties with Silence, than Arguments, Libertines presently raise a Trophy, they sing *Paana*, and cry out *Victory*. To cut of this Retreat, I'll show you in short, that Virtue and Vice lie not barely in Opinion.

And here I appeal to the Verdict of Mankind : Single me out one Man, whose Reputation did not suffer under the very Suspicion of Vice ; and if the bare Suspicion of Evil, has such a degrading Quality in the Opinions of Men, Debauchery it self must have a greater : Human Nature has such an Abhorrence of Sin, that it cannot value the Wicked equally to the Virtuous. I never yet heard of a Man, who seriously commended another for his Intemperance, or plac'd Lewdness among his Titles of Honour : Tho' Sobriety, Chastity, and Justice are run down in Practice, they stand fair in our Esteem, and no Man yet has attempted to disgrace an Enemy, by laying those Vertues to his Charge : In fine, it's impossible for a Man in his Wits, to esteem an other less, because he is good : Nay, in this degenerate Age, nothing blasts more a rising Reputation,

Reputation, than the Imputation of Wickedness; and even those, who in a frantick Transport applaud a Debauchee, upon cooler Thoughts despise him: If all Actions are equal; why are their Effects so different? If Vertue has no Advantage over Vice; why do the Profligates esteem *that*, tho' they embrace *this*? Why do Men practise Vertue with Confidence, and Vice with a blushing Face, and a trembling Conscience? Why do they Sin with Fear in their Looks, and an Earthquake in their Minds? These are terrible Symptoms, that the Difference between Good and Evil lies deeper than the Imagination.

Come, Sir, remember when you feel the Smart of everlasting Flames, you'll take small Pleasure in the Thought that once you derided 'em; you'll not suffer less in that dark Region, because you go laughing thither; nor endure the Torments better, because you would not believe 'em.

Ariovistus was of too haughty an Humour to bare so severe a Check with Patience, and too violent to dissemble his Resentment; wherefore turning to *Eusebius*; Sir, said he, you Rail better than you Reason: Our Tongues began
the

the Dispute, our Swords must end it; you have left my Tenets, to attack my Person, and rather level at my Actions, than at my Religion: You are a Man of Honour, and can manage a Weapon, as well as an Argument; In a word, I expect Satisfaction.

The Company began to Smile at this odd Rodomontade, but *Eudoxus* told him, in controvertistical Debates, there was no Appeal from Reason to the Sword; that it was more prudent to confess Errors, than to defend 'em; to cancel past Crimes, than to commit new ones.

But *Eusebius*, who resolv'd to discountenance Latitudinarianism, by confounding its Abettor, took him up roundly. Sir, said he, I fear your Gascoynades no more than your Arguments; nor your Sword more than your Reasons: Your Conduct is as strange as your Religion; because I have wounded your Principles, you invite me to tilt at your Body: No, no; Sir, I value my Life too much, to expose it for a Punctilio; and your Soul, to send it into the other World with a Rapier: I had rather swing off *Tyburn* into Eternity, than
to

to be duel'd into it; for a Duel is a very ill Distemper to dye of.

Besides; should I accept your Challenge, perchance you might disappoint me: I have known some huffing Bullies, who never were couragious, but when they stood out of the Swords Reach: They would send you a *hundred Defies* for a Word, but had too much Honour to justify *one*; nay, they wou'd upon second Thoughts submit to a Bastonade, rather than occasion Bloodshed; and if once their Adversary drew Blood, like Wizards they had no Power to hurt him; in fine, they would always begin the War, and constantly made the first Overtures of Peace; and thus they shew'd at once both Courage and Discretion: Whether this Character fits you, I dare not determine; this notwithstanding I must affirm, that these who pretend to believe *least* the Terrors of an other World, apprehend them *most*; and no Men fear *more* eternal Torments, than those who deny the Soul's Immortality: Lay by your Sword for a more urgent Occasion, Fencing will never relieve a Controversy abandon'd by Reason; a satisfactory Return to my Arguments will support you much better than

than a Push: For tho' you chance to foil me at Tilting, you will not disarm my Reasons.

Ariovistus was too proud to submit to Truth, tho' he was too weak to withstand it; he could not defend his Errors, and would not abandon 'em; so that in a Huff he call'd for his Horse; rub'd off, and left the Field to *Eusebius*.

His Friend apologiz'd for his Rudeness, and cast his Incivility on the Excess of Passion. I hope, said he to the Company, you will excuse *Ariovistus*. I confess he is to blame, but oftentimes Anger runs away with the Judgment, the wisest Men are subject to Indiscretions: He was baffled, and you know a Defeat to a Man of Honour is a mortifying Misfortune; in fine, having lost his Cause, you must not wonder, if Patience deserted him.

Euseb. I excuse his Incivility, but condemn his Prudence; he saw his Error, why did he not abjure it? He saw Truth, why did he not embrace it? A Man that will pawn his Soul to rescue his Honour, forfeits both: But I confess, in vain we expect Prudence of Libertines: Men without Religion are always with-

without Reason ; they may boast of Science, and Wit till Dooms-day, but nobody can believe they are over-stock'd with either : No, no ; they have only just Knowledge enough to see their Errors, and Wit enough to ensure their Damnation ; when once they are drench'd in loose Principles, they are past Recovery : They turn all Antidotes into Rats-bane, and so either live in Obstinacy, or dye in Despair.

Then taking *Eudoxus* aside : Are you not, continu'd he, almost sick of Latitudinarianism ? You saw how weakly *Ariovistus* defended it ; yet he was not ill provided of those Materials, that are necessary to plead well, a bad Cause ; he manag'd his Arguments to the best Advantage, and edg'd his Reasons with all the little Artifices of Language, and Confidence ; but Truth has prevail'd over Imposture, and he carries home Nothing, but Chagrin and Confusion. I hope Providence has reserv'd the Profit of his Defeat for you ; he has condemn'd all Religions, and Christianity among the rest ; and at the same time turns Atheist to live a Libertine.

Eudox.

Eudox. Nothing but Rage drove *Ariovistus* into that Precipice, he was upon a Pinch, poor Gentleman, and shot Blasphemy when he had spent his Reasons; his Performance falls short of my Expectation. I perceive that Boasting is not an Argument of Wit, and that Confidence and Truth are not always on the same Side. *Ariovistus* who caus'd my Infidelity, has now cur'd it; I owe my Conversion to the Weakness of his Proofs, and to the strength of yours. Christianity is certainly the only Saving Religion, but I am hamper'd in a Labyrinth, and unless you lend me a Hand shall wander eternally in a *Maander* of Mistakes: For Christian Religion branches out into a thousand Sects, our Island is a kind of *Pantheon*, and our People like the old *Arabians*, bend to the Breath of every pretended Inspiration: Some pretend Law, others Scripture: These Antiquity, those Novelty, and others Illumination. It's hard to Calculate up all the Religions that divide the Nation, and almost impossible to examen them. If I must chuse none, before I have Impartially survey'd all, I may live a *Seeker*, and dye an *Atheist*.
Arc

Are all those Communions Saving? Or is there but one?

Euseb. There is but one Saving Congregation, and the Discovery of it is easier than you imagine: In a few Days I will put you in the Way to Heaven, which none can miss, but those who are resolv'd to overlook it: Interest byasses some, Education others, Faction deludes many, and Sensuality over-bears more: In fine, when Men consult their Inclinations, and model Religion by the Advice of Passion, you must not wonder, if they take Fancy for Revelation, and hug Illusion for Truth.

Eusebius staid a Week with *Eudoxus*, and settled his Judgment. Truth flasht such a Light on his Understanding, that he admir'd his former Blindness, and thought it more difficult to mistake the true Church, than he did before to find it; he learnt what he was to do, as well as what he was to believe; and resolv'd to square his Thoughts, and Actions by the Rule of his Duty: He has kept his purpose, and at present has the Reputation of an accomplish'd Gentleman, and, what he values most, of a pious Christian. Thus Providence, which

permitted *Theomachus* to fall from a State of Virtue, into a deplorable Habit of Vice, rais'd young *Eudoxus* from the Abyss of Vice, to the Top of Virtue; to teach poor Mortals, that the Sinner must not despair, nor the Saint presume.

Eusebius having brought this great Business to a most happy Conclusion, return'd to *London*, and gave Notice to *Theomachus* of his Arrival.

D I A L O G U E XIII.

Having settled Eudoxus, Eusebius meets Theomachus, who offers to believe the Existence of a God upon good Reasons, tho' not Mathematically evident.

E*usebius* the next Morning gave *Theomachus* a Visite, he found him in the Company of some Gentlemen of his Cabal, whom the Noise of the Dispute had alarm'd; they were concern'd that *Eusebius* had the Face to stand up in Defence of God, to plead so warmly against

against Atheism, and that after the first *Camisado* he was return'd to beat up their Quarters. *Theomachus* perswaded himself, that the Journey of *Eusebius* was a meer put-off, and that he had really no Business in the Country, but to wave the Conference at *London*, and so spread abroad his late Engagement, you may be sure, to his own Advantage: He flatter'd himself and others also, that the Dispute was at an End, and being freed from his Enemy, he gave full Liberty to his Tongue, and launch'd out into Panegyricks of his vast Performance, to the Prejudice of Truth and Modesty: The News of *Eusebius's* Arrival damp't his Hopes, and convinc'd him, he had rais'd a Trophy before the Victory: He had no mind to engage, nor could he retreat with Honour; but in fine, he resolv'd upon the Conference, as the less Evil, and invited his Friends to the Scirmish: He receiv'd *Eusebius* with Demonstrations of Civility, and was rather prodigal than sparing of Carresses: After many reciprocal Complements, *Eusebius* address'd himself to *Theomachus*.

Euseb. Sir, at our last Meeting I charg'd *Atheists* with Imprudence, because being uncertain whether there were a God, a Hell, or a Heaven, they liv'd as if they were certain there were no such Things; you endeavour'd to fence against the Charge, and to plead not Guilty; because, tho' you should take up, and model your Life by the Rules of the most severe Morals, this ungrateful Restraint would only serve, perchance, to lessen your Torments in the next Life, if there be a God, but would never be able to set you in Heaven: For God, said you, requires as an indispensable Homage; not only a well regulated Life, but a stable and undoubting Belief of his Being; the one is of small Advantage without the other; you pretended this Steadiness was not in your Power, and ask'd convincing Reasons to settle and fix your Judgment; I promis'd you Satisfaction, and am come to keep my Word; but I suppose an Evidence, below that of Mathematical Demonstrations will satisfy you.

Theom. The very Question is reflecting, and you must either suspect my Wit, or my Judgment to propose it: I know God

is neither a *Line*, *Superficies* nor *Solid*, he comes not within the *Predicament* of a *Figure*, and therefore lies out of the Reach of *Mathematicks*: A Man that will acquiesce to Nothing but strict *Demonstrations*, would do well to disband from *Society*, to lock up his Reason in his *Closet*, and only carry it about him on extraordinary *Occasions*; he may take up with the *Scepticks*, and doubt of his own *Being*: No Man can demonstrate by *Euclide*, or *Archimedes*, there is such a *City* as *Constantinople*, or that there has ever been such an *Emperour* as *Augustus*; and yet, God be thank'd, upon the credible *Testimony* of those who have seen the one, and of those *Authors* who have writ of the other, I no more doubt of 'em, than of this unquestionable Principle, *pars est minor toto*: Some Things may possibly be *False*, tho' I dare pawn my *Life*, they are not.

Euseb. Your Discourse is *reasonable*: For were you and I cast upon a desert *Island* by the Strefs of *Wind* and *Weather*, and should we find in this abandon'd Region a stately *Palace*, built with all *Symmetry* of *Art*, we should conclude, it was the *Work* of an *Architect*, not

of *Nature* or *Chance*; nor would it be in our Power to doubt of it; yet 'tis possible for blind Matter to *Rendezvous* it self into a stately *Louvre*, for by a lucky Meeting of Atoms, it may be jumbled and settled in this beautiful and regular Form. A Hundred thousand blind Men, (tho' they set out from all the Parts of the World) may possibly meet together upon *Black-Heath*, and draw up in *Rank and File*; yet should we see this extraordinary great Army in Battle-Array, without the help of a Syllogism, we should infer, they were led to the Place, and each conducted to his Station by some, who had better Eyes than they.

I conceive likewise you do not require Physical Demonstrations, *id est*, convincing Proofs drawn from Sense; for God being suppos'd a Spirit, cannot fall under corporal Sense, and tho' he should present himself to the Eyes by assuming a Body, the Spectacle might amaze us, but could not give us any rational Assurance, that there is an *infinite Spirit*.

Theom. I ask such Proofs as leave the Understanding satisfy'd, as fix the Judgment, and remove all prudent Doubt;
for

for such Arguments deserve as firm an Assent, as the most strickt *Mathematical Demonstrations*. I am as sure there is such a Place as *Constantinople*, as that the first Proposition of *Euclide* is true; and doubt no more but *Cæsar* was, than that I am.

Euseb. 'Tis easy I see to agree in Preliminaries, when the one Side proposes Nothing, but what is Just, and the other will receive what is Reasonable: You have admitted what neither in Prudence, nor Reason you could reject, and I have only ask'd what I could not omit, without betraying the Interest of Truth, and the Merits of the Cause I have undertaken to defend. Now seeing the Subject is not capable of *Mathematical Demonstrations*, nor even of Physical Evidence, in the State we are, methinks, I apprehend two Ways by which God can manifest his Being to Man: First by an internal Impression stamp'd with his divine Signet in our Nature, which leads us naturally to the Knowledge of his Existence, as the innate Light of our Understanding, shews us the Truth of the first *Principles of Discourse*.

Secondly by visible Effects, which Reason tells us must be father'd on some Cause, and which without Constraint and Violence, our Understanding cannot attribute to any Thing but a Being infinitely Powerful, infinitely Wise, and infinitely Good.

Theo. I agree, these two Ways would be sufficient to settle a reasonable Man in the Belief of a Deity, and that an Atheist would be the most absurd, the most unreasonable Creature in the World, if he requir'd more.

Euseb. Well Sir, hitherto we have walk'd Hand in Hand, our Judgments have been Uniform, and I hope our good Intelligence will continue in the following Conference. I will prove you have these very Proofs of his Being, you confess sufficient, and as plain as you could in Reason expect, supposing he were. Let us therefore discuss Things in Order, and produce our Proofs in their Turn; when we confound Arguments, we confound *Idea's*, and only contemplate Truth thro' a Cloud.

DIALOGUE XIV.

The first Proof for a Deity, drawn from the universal Consent of Mankind.

Euseb. **T**HE Notion of a God is so deeply ingrafted in our Minds, that it seems to be twisted and interwoven with our Nature; it's of the same Date with our *Species*, it runs thro' our Veins with our Blood, and is convey'd to us from our Ancestors; it's neither fixt to Climate, nor Complexion, it takes in all Times, as well as all Places; it's engraved in the Hearts of the *Africans*, as well as of the *Asiaticks*; the barbarous *Topinbays* of *Brasile* feel the Impression, as well as the most polite *Europeans*; and the very brutish *Hottentotes* of the *Cape*, in Spight of Savageness, shew they are Men meerly by acknowledging a supream Being; the old *Assyrians* have left Posterity a convincing Testimony they believ'd a God, because they coyn'd fallie ones; they had never multiply'd Divinities, had they believ'd there was none, nor paid di-

vine Worship to Statues, had they not been perswaded there was some Being above them, that commanded Hommage, because he deserv'd it.

The *Medes* brought down the *Assyrian* Grandure, and bury'd the Empire together with its Emperor, in a Grave of Ashes; yet these new Conquerors, who annul'd the old Laws, and enacted new ones, who thrust out ancient Customs to make room for others quarrel'd not with the *Assyrians* about the Belief of a God, they liv'd in the same Perswasion; *Nabucadonozar* wou'd needs share Worship with his Maker, and so set up his own Statute to receive those Honours which belong'd to the supreme Being.

The *Persians*, Successors of the *Median* Greatness, succeeded also in their Belief of a Deity: The conquering *Macedonians* agreed in this Point with the vanquish'd *Indians*; and *Rome* surpass'd all other Nations in Superstition, more than Courage; she built her Greatness upon the Supposition of a Deity, and as some remark, grew so Great, because she was so Pious: She found the Stamp of a Divinity, wherever she carry'd her victorious Arms, and the Conquest of
Foreign

Foreign Gods, as well as of Captive Princes, set off her Generals Triumphs. In a Word, the Belief of a Deity reach'd as far as the Plantations of Men; it has never yet been shut out of one City, one Bourg, or perchance one Family: The most barbarous Wretches that ever were, knew there was a Deity, tho' they mistook in the Application of their Worship: You may almost as soon find a People without Souls, as without a God, they rather will dedicate an Altar to an unknown Deity, than have none.

The *English, Dutch, Portuguese,* and *Spaniards* braving the Fury of the Winds, and the threatening Surges of the enrag'd Ocean, have discover'd a *New World* in our Days, almost equal to the Old, they have rifled the very Wildernesses, and ransack'd the Mines; wherever they met with the Traces of Men, they fell upon the Footsteps of a God; these Barbarians that liv'd without Laws, without Houses, without Commerce, were seldom found without Temples; and tho' a savage Education, and more savage Vices had obscur'd the Notion, they had not the Power to deface it; 'twas legible in
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the very Night of Idolatry, in the Obscurity of Errors, and some Nations thought 'twas less Absurdity to worship the Devil, than to deny a God. Now if you call for Proofs, I can present you a Thousand, as strong and satisfactory, as the Subject will bear: Past Matters of Fact can only be convey'd down to us by Written, or Oral Tradition; and those of our own Time, that lie at a Distance, can only be prov'd by credible Witnesses; what I maintain has all these Supports, and by consequence can be question'd only by those, who will be sure of Nothing, but that they doubt of all Things.

Theo. Whether this be true or false, your Cause will not be much the better, nor mine worse; yet I must tell you, you are mistaken in your Account: I have read in *Acoska*, and others, that divers People, both in the *East* and *West Indies*, live as well without a God, as without Houses; they love Nothing but their Ease, and fear Nothing but their bordering Enemies: Besides our *European Atheists* muster'd up in one Body, would make a considerable *Figure*; and *London* alone upon an emergent Occasion can draw out a brisk *Brigade*:

I am confident at least we exceed you in Quality, if you surpass us in Number, and why may not the one ballance the other.

Euseb. Oh! I may cry out with *Seneca*,
Mentiuntur qui dicunt se non sentire Deum,
nam etsi tibi affirmant interdium, noctu tamen
& sili dubitant; they lye who say they believe no God, for tho' by Day in the Hurry of Company, and Heat of Debauch, they may profess *Atheism*; yet in Darkness and Retirement they change their Mind: Say if you please *no God* is the Wish of *Many*, but the Opinion of *None*: But if some Authors have said so, others equally credible, have contradicted 'em; yet all agree that those People have more of the Beast, than of the Man; they wander in Woods like *Tygers* without Commerce, without human Society, they worry their own Species, and prey upon their nearest Relations; so that like Children, tho' they have Reason, they want the Use of it; they live without Reflection, and consequently without Discourse; and indeed I do not see why Diseases of the Soul may not untune the Organs of the Brain, as well as those of the Body; why Education and Barbarity may not obstruct

obstruct the Operations of the Intellect, as well as a Frenzy. The whole Set of *European Atheists* are but a Pack of daring Debauchees, who pride in Infamy, and blush at Modesty: *They Reason ill, and Live worse*; they hate Truth no less than Sobriety, and are too insignificant, either to countenance a good Cause, or prejudice it: Their Votes like Cyphers without an Unite, make no Number.

But let us face your Atheists with those who believe a God, and we shall find after a general Muster (tho' you appear also at the Head of the *London Brigade*) an infinite Disproportion. Would it not be true, that all the Citizens of *London* profess the Religion of the *Church of England*, altho' one *Presbyterian*, or *Recusant* upon Examen should be found among 'em? And will you contest this universal Verity, that reasonable Creatures endeavour to defend themselves from the Injuries of Wind and Weather, because some brutish Savages lie under the open Canopy of Heaven without Fence, or a Hut to skreen off the Heats of the Summer, or the Cold of the Winter? Yet the Disproportion between you and us, is ten times greater,

er, than between *one Recusant*, and the Citizens of *London*, or between these Men who make Provisions against the Rigour of Seasons, and those who do not: If therefore in one Case, a particular Fact does not prejudice the universal Inference, why must it in the other? *Aristotle* tells us that some rejected this Principle, *A Thing cannot be, and not be at the same time*; and that *Anaxagoras* maintain'd *Snow is black*; yet I suppose, if I say the Principle is receiv'd by all Mankind, you will not except against my Assertion. I may then conclude, that the Perswasion of a God runs thro' our whole *Species*, and spreads as wide as the remotest *Colonie*.

Theo. If I dispute my Ground by Inches, we shall make a long Work of our Conference: Pray go on.

Euseb. Our Difference about the Matter of Fact being at an End, I ask you the Origin of this universal Impression; from whence comes it that this *Chymical* Object continually encounters and haunts our Understanding? Why do our Apprehensions rove in another World? And flush the Being of a Deity?

Theo.

Theo. Some witty Gentlemen will tell you, this Notion came into the World by an accidental Fright; Men started at Thunder, before they knew the Cause of it, and then some of greater Wits than their Neighbours improv'd this *panick* Fear into Religion; they perswaded the *Mobile* there was some body above, that spoke aloud, and breath'd forth his Anger in Flames and Smoak: Others with much Probability affirm this Perswasion springs from an innate Fear in the Mind of Man, and a restless Apprehension of the worst that may happen, *Primum in orbe Deos fecit timor.*

Euseb. A Man that will not take Notice of the true Reason of Things, which generally is but one, may forge a Hundred false ones; for tho' one Path leads to Truth, a Thousand conduct us into Error. Pray, Sir, seeing Men were first frightened, and then cheated into the Belief of a Deity, of whom did that witty Gentleman borrow the Notion? He was certainly imbu'd with the Idea of a God, before he could communicate it to his Neighbours? The Cheat was first put on him before he deceiv'd others: Who impos'd on him? His Name deserves

deserves a considerable Place in History, and I do not see, why our Fore-Fathers should have been less careful to conserve his Memory, who slyly brought the Notion of a God into the World, than his who convey'd the *Trojan* Horse into the City, and betray'd it to the *Grecians*: But tho' you satisfy this *Quare*, the same Question will return, who couzen'd him? Nor will it cease, till we discover the Origin, or have run you up beyond the first Moment of Time; the only tolerable Escape is to resolve this Fear into Tradition.

But pray tell me, how you know this Impression *ab immemoriali*, has been handed down from Father to Son? You are Men of Parts, and glory more in Wit than Grace; you generally scorn all Authority but your own, and appeal even from what we call *Scripture*, to Reason: Back your Assertion with any tolerable Proof, and for once I'll take it for Demonstration: All you can say amounts to this, that perchance long ago, some thinking Brain wrapt up in continual Speculation, blundered upon the Notion, and sent it round; that it found a kind Reception,

tion, and ever since has been kept in Countenance and Reputation: But is it not strange that one meer *Perchance* that stands for *no God*, should weigh more with an Atheist, than positive Reason for him?

This Tradition is of a very ancient Date, and older in all probability than the Invention of Writing; for ought then you know, it has been from the Beginning; nay, I may add it's ten times more likely, it sprang up with Man, than that a Man first started the Imposture, and others made it over to Posterity: For the Impression of a God sinks into the Souls, not only of those polite, and civiliz'd Nations, who have preserv'd from Oblivion some Remnants of past Transactions in Books and Records, but even of those who are as ignorant of what pass'd in the last Age, as of what was done two thousand Years ago, and of those whose *Arithmetick* goes not beyond their Fingers, nor their Knowledge beyond their own Remembrance. What likelihood then that those who are Strangers to all Tradition, should be so well acquainted with this?

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But to dispatch the first Gentleman ; when the natural Cause of Thunder was discover'd ; why was not the Cheat unmask'd ? Why did not the *Phantome* disappear at the Sight of Knowledge, which Ignorance and Error had created ? Were the Understandings of Men so cow'd with the Cheat, they durst not struggle against it ? Or were they so enamour'd of their Fears, as to cherish the Object of their Torment ? If this be true, our Ancestors were cast in another Mould than we, they hugg'd what we hate, and doted on what we abhor. If a Man imposes on us by a Surprise, so soon as the Cheat is discover'd, we stand upon our Guard, and like Birds shot at, grow wild : We become cautious, and reserv'd, we stand off in Jealousy and Suspicion : But our tame Ancestors, who were thunder'd and lighten'd into the Belief of a God, kept up the Illusion when they had unvizarded the Trick : they lik'd, it seems, the Conceit, and were so pleas'd with Fears and Apprehensions, they resolv'd to make 'em Immortal.

Theo. These Gentlemen will tell you, Time wore out the Memory of the Imposture, but not the Effects: The
Cheat

Cheat was soon forgot, tho' the Notion of a God remain'd ; Education kept this on foot, and continu'd it to our Time ; and indeed the Original Tincture of Education seldom wears out : Tho' some imbred Principles are impregnable against Education, yet some Customs arise from Education, which Nature it self can hardly deal with.

Euseb. Atheists when they have lost their other Holds, retreats to Education ; they look upon it as an advantageous Post, and think themselves there, not only out of the Reach of Surprise, but of Assault ; it is their darling Argument, and therefore deserves a peculiar Consideration. I desire you therefore to keep it for a Reserve, at present I have the second Gentleman upon my hands, and I must do him Right before I leave him. You say, *other Gentlemen affirm with great Probability, that the Perswasion of a God springs from an innate Fear in the Mind of Man, and a restless Apprehension of the Worst that may happen ; and then you prop the Assertion with the Authority of a Poet. This is in Mr. Hobbs's Phrase ; Fear of Power invisible, feign'd by the Mind, or imagin'd from Tales publickly told, is Religion.*

This

This Evasion is liable to great Exceptions; for supposing Man has an innate Fear, that he is subject to imagine dreadful Things, and apt to skare himself with gasty Apparitions of his own Coining; yet he cannot fear, unless he frames, or finds the Object that raises this unquiet Passion: what Object can he frame in the Shop of his Apprehensions which has not some Relation to Misfortunes he has either seen or heard of? The Fancy may make strange Combinations, and tie together Things that have no Connexion, yet it must know those things before it links 'em together; for the Apprehension, like the Will, cannot work upon those Materials that lie out of its Sphere. When the Steams of the Hypocondry mount up to the Brain, a Man may fancy himself at the last Gasp, tho' his Pulse beat even, and he enjoys perfect Health, for he has seen others dye, and knows he is liable to the same Fate; but the most splenetick *Coxcomb* in the World cannot fright himself with a Pleurisy, unless he knows there be such a Disease in Nature. The Notion of a God may therefore awake Man's Fear, but the most timerous Nature cannot tremble

ble at the Apprehension of a God, unless such a Being be known : Seeing therefore the Knowledge of a God precedes his Fear, who stampt on Man the Impression ?

Theom. We must take things as we find 'em. Man depends Originally on himself, he is beholding to no exterior Principle for his Existence, he is as he ever was, and will always be, without any interveining Change : The Notion of a Deity (these Gentlemen say) has stuck close to him from Eternity, and in all Probability will jogg on with him till the Species fall into Nothing ; but to what intent this Fury hovers about him, Doctors have not determin'd ; some notwithstanding are inclin'd to believe, that Nature envious of Mans happiness, rais'd this Spirit to cool his Hopes, and sophisticate his Pleasures.

Euseb. Your Gentlemen *Incognito*, who argue by Proxy, triumph without doubt, and fancy this Answer has made the Business wonderfully clear ; but I appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, whether it does not rather start Difficulties than solve 'em. I have prov'd, that Men knew God before they fear'd him,

him, and consequently that this Fear could not spring from any innate timorous Disposition, but that it must be ascrib'd to the great Author of Nature, who has stamp'd on our Souls the Knowledge of his Being; now your young Gentlemen very confidently tell me, Man was *ab aeterno*, and stands indebted for his Being to no Body but his own Nature, and they thrust on me this fine System, with such an Air of Assurance, as if it were clear beyond Debate, and near allied to the first Principles; whereas the Thing is not only false, but absurd to Dotage, as I shall make out in its proper place; but *abyssus abyssum invocat*, one Absurdity ushers in another; a bad *Thesis* is always supported with weak Proofs.

But for the present I admit your *Hypothesis*. *Aristotle* assumes this Aphorism as a Principle *natura nihil agit frustra*, Nature does nothing in vain; now whether we cast our View without us, or within us, whether we survey the great World or the less, we shall subscribe to the Maxim: The natural Inclination of all Things, either tend to the Perfection or Conservation of Individuals, or else to the Beauty
and

and Symmetry of the Whole; Sympathies, and Antipathies have their proper Stations and Employments; every Being, tho' never so minute, acts its Part in the great Theatre of the Universe; there are no Mutes in the whole Creation, that appear meerly to fill the Stage: Seeing therefore all other Things have their Task cut out for them, and labour in their several Posts, why should this Notion of a God like a Drone stand idle without Office, without Employment? Has Nature flung it into the World at Random, as the Ostrich lays her Eggs, and then flies into the Desert? Why should you arraign her Prudence in this Point, who shews her Wisdom in the Management of all Things besides? Ought we not rather to question your Integrity, than her Conduct?

Besides, whether all Things were *ab eterno* of themselves, or jostled into Being by a lucky Hit of Chance, and *Legerdemain*, they have at least happen'd as well, as if an infinite Wisdom and Power had a Hand in the Contrivance; but it's most certain, an infinite Wisdom would never have engrafted in the
Minds

Minds of Men, so vain, so superfluous a Principle, had there been no God in the World; therefore seeing such a Principle runs thro' the whole Mass of Mankind; we have all the Reason in the World to conclude *there is a God*.

A Person of Quality in the Company, who measur'd his Wit by his Estate, would needs come in to *Theomachus's* Succour; he thought his Title would add a Luster to his Arguments, and that he might silence *Eusebius* by Authority, tho' he could not by Reason: Methinks, said he, with Submission to better Judgments, *Theomachus* has overlook'd the decisive Solution of the Difficulty, yet I must needs say, he has behav'd himself in the Contest like a Man of Parts, he has not shrunk under the Character of a witty and well-spoken Man, but maintain'd his Reputation; yet often times Warmth and Eagerness let Advantage slip, and we remember not in a Hurry those Arguments that occurs, when our Temper is cool and sedate: I do not see why we should have Recourse to accidental, or natural Fears, or why we should fetch this Notion from the further End of Eternity; we can reconcile the Difference, and

N

stop

stop the Breach at less Expence of Time and Labour: I am apt to think Education will unriddle the Mystery; we easily take the first Tincture, and when it's well imbib'd it never wears off: The first Rudiments sticks so close, that often times they never leave us, and so by a pardonable Mistake even wise Men ascribe many Things to our Nature, which we owe to the sole Instruction of our Nurse. *Turcism* runs in some Families, *Popery* in others, and the reform'd Religion in mine: Whence comes this Variety but from Education, and a certain Influence of the Climate? Had I been born at *Constantinople*, I had taken the *Turban* instead of a Hat, and Circumcision in place of Baptism; had I *Spain* or *Italy* for my Country, *Popery* would have been my Religion, and in all Probability I should have been as ready to fight for *Clement* the XIth's Prerogative of *Primacy*, as I am now to fight against it: Education alone has continu'd Religions; we are Protestants in *England* now, because our Parents and Governours were so the last Age: The Turks have taken their *Alcoran* from their Ancestors, and the present Papists, Transubstantiation, seven Sacraments,

ments, and the Mass from theirs: Now if our Fore-Fathers by Education could infuse into us the Belief of these several Religions, why not that of a God? And if they could, why should we craze our Brain, and exhaust our Spirits in the Pursuit of another Origin?

The Company applauded my Lord's Performance, and some were for petitioning for a higher Patent, for the signal Service he had done the Nation.

Euseb. Under favour, my Lord, this Expedient will not do; nay those Difficulties I object against *Theomachus* turn upon your Hypothesis with no less Violence than his: For this Notion of a God could not be spread by Education, before it was in the World; it could not be tost from past Ages down to the Present, unless it was in past Ages; and if it was, it either was *ab aeterno*, or began in Time: If you say the First, you build the whole Proof on meer Conjecture and Supposition, nor can you make one Tittle of it good, without begging the Question: If you say the Second, than either it began with Man, or after him; if with Man, then God who made Man stamp'd on his Mind

this Impression ; if it began after him, pray who first sail'd into the other World, and made the Discovery of this airy Spectre ? Where did he live ? And when ? Or at least if you are not able to date the Birth of the Notion, shew me when it was not, and I will pay your Argument the same Respect I owe your Person ; but I cannot take Words for Reason, nor a proofless Supposition for Evidence : You are the Capital Wits of the World ; cautious Persons, that will not be impos'd on, that in all Occasions call for Evidence.

Besides, according to the Characters of Education, and Nature ; the Notion has no Resemblance with Education, but every Line, every Stroke, represents Nature to the Life. We say Self-Love, and the Inclination to Pleasure are natural to Man, because we see these two Passions accompany him in all Ages, in all Places, and in all Employments ; we love our selves now, as our Ancestors did six thousand Years ago ; we pursue Pleasure in 1702 with the same Eagerness our Fore-Fathers did in 1000, and even those who acting by more high and more divine Motives fly Pleasure, cannot avoid the
Inclina-

Inclination : The Desire of Glory, according to all Men, rises also from Nature, because it puts the Thoughts of all Men in a Ferment, it awakens their Industry, and enlivens 'em for Action; we all love to survive the Grave, and hate that our Name should be nail'd up in the Coffin : This Perswasion begun with Man, and has continu'd in his Blood without Variation, without Interruption; it warms old Age, and fires Youth, it assaults the Peasant, it captivates the Prince; those who dare not fetch Glory from the Camp, pursue it at the Bar, they plead up their Names when they want Resolution to fight 'em up; in fine, Nature is the same in all Men, it's stable, uniform, permanent; but Education is of another Complexion; 'tis always upon the Change; Time, Interest, and Conquest establish new Customs, they set up new Principles of Education, and proclaim new Maxims : The Conquest of *William* the First forc'd *England* to bow to new Customs, as well as new Masters; it abolish'd the old Laws, together with the ancient Kings, and our Education became *French* with our Governours : Look where you will, and you'll find

Education always follow'd the Fortune of the State, the Subversion of this was a Prelude to the Establishment of that.

If therefore upon Inquiry, we find the Instinct of a God has pass'd un-touch'd, thro' all the Revolutions of Times and Empires; if it has bore up against the Fury of the most barbarous Conqueror; what can we conclude, but that it is fixt and rooted in Nature? But that God has stamp't this Character of himself upon us? and that it springs not from the Principles of Education? Now I have already demonstrated, that the Notion of a God possess'd all Men's Minds from the Beginning of Ages; that it has stood immovable, amidst all the Vicissitudes of Time, and all the Turns of Fortune: Empires have fallen either under the Weight of their own Greatness, or the Fury of the barbarous Conquerors: Nations have left Barbarity to take up Civility, and again abandon'd Civility to replunge into Barbarity; they have quitted their old Habitations to seek out new ones, and lost their very Language with their Liberty: One Custom has jostled out another, and Time has wore out that,

to make room for a Third : These strange Revolutions have wrought no Change in the Belief of a Deity ; it has surviv'd Empires, and prov'd more durable than the *Colloßus of Rhodes*, or the Temple of *Diana* ; neither the Corruption of Nature, nor all the vain Attempts of Atheists, have been able to banish it from one Town, Village, or Family : The Notion of a God has made Mankind in all Ages, and all Places fall before it, and those Men who dare Dispute against him cannot forbear to tremble. 'Tis then most certain that either Man has no natural Propension, or that this Impression of a supream Being is one.

In the mean time I do not doubt, but Education may limit our natural Inclinations, and rather tie them to one Object than another ; for tho' naturally all Men propend to Pleasure, yet what is agreeable to some is not to others ; what touches smoothly my Organ, may grate upon yours. *Domitian* delighted himself with sticking flies : *Nero* with driving Chariots : Some are for *Venus*, others for *Bacchus* : And this confining the universal Principle rises either from Education, or Constitution,
or

or both: Again, tho' the Desire of Glory be Natural and Universal, yet Education often assigns the Object; and hence it is, that Punctilio's vary with the Climat; some place their Glory in overcoming an Enemy, others in pardoning him; some judge nothing more Glorious than to ride at the Head of an Army, to sack Towns, and drive Desolation before them; whilst others laugh at their Folly, and wrapt up in Speculation, think it more honourable to write of Wars, than to wage 'em: In a word *Theomachus*, you perchance perswade your self, nothing can be more illustrious than to despise God, whilst I am satisfy'd the true Glory of every rational Creature consists in Obedience to his Commands, and Love to his Person: These are the Effects of Education, they vary with the *Meridian*, they become obsolete with Time, and like Fashions or *Almanacks*, grow out of Date.

Let us say the same of God; tho' the Perswasion of a God be engrafted in Nature, yet Education may contribute to frame different Ideas of him, and to propagate various Worships: Some People fell before a *Crocodile*, others

thers before a *Red Cloath*, the *Romans* worship'd Men, and some *Indians* the Devil: When once Ignorance had hatcht these monstrous Ideas of God, and Authority had given them Credit, Education spread the Error, and handed it down to Posterity: But the Notion of a Divinity preceded the Infection of Education, and Men believ'd a supream Being, and a true God, before they set up the Statues of false ones.

I grant that the different Sects which divide, and subdivide Christianity, owe their Propagation to Education (I mean *generally*) and what wonder? For Christianity is a Reveal'd Religion, its Mysteries lies above the Reach of Nature, our Understanding cannot come at them, God himself has been pleas'd to communicate them, he has writ them on Paper, not on our Hearts, and we must hear them before we can believe them: Parents take care, either by themselves, or others, to instill into their Children the Principles of these Sects they profess, and to chuse for them a Religion before they can make any Choice for themselves: Thus most Men enter upon their Parents Religions, as they do upon their Estates, and resolve that, which will

convey them into an endless Misery or Happiness, into meer Education: But the Existence of a God is printed in our Nature; we know it without the Help of external Revelation or Preaching; we are our own Scripture; our own Apostles.

But do not think, I deny Education can have any Part in framing in us the Knowledge of a God; tho' it be natural for a Mother to love her Children, and for a Child to respect his Mother, yet Education concurs, this draws up those reciprocal Duties in more lively Colours, and puts the last Hand to the ruff Draught of Nature: Just so, in our present Controversy, tho' Nature leads us to the Knowledge of a God, yet Education hastens it; this brightens often times the Idea, and polishes it with Instructions and Precepts: Thus my Lord I have return'd an Answer to your Objection, and without the least Grain of Partiality prov'd, that *Atheists* retreat in vain to Education.

Theo. What you deny to Education cannot be refus'd to Policy. This Whim of a God was hatc'd in some Closet by a secret *Juncto* of Statesmen. It
first

first issu'd from the Court, and was probably posted into the Country by Proclamation; Authority sent it Abroad, Fear kept it Countenance, and at last the Stamp of Sovereignty propagated it; the Trick took marvelously, the Apprehension of a *Deity*, the Terrors of eternal Pains, with the flattering Allurements of eternal Pleasure, aw'd the Subject into Obedience and Submission; and then these Effects so beneficial to Government, easily perswaded Princes to cherish the Illusion, and to keep up the Imposture.

Euseb. Good God! That Men should be so wise to deceive themselves! Is the Belief of a God so conducing to the Bouying up of human Society? So necessary for the suppressing of Disorders? And the Conservation of a just Subordination? 'Twere then to be wish'd at least, there were such a Thing, and were I of the great Counsel of the Nation, I would offer a Bill to both the Houses for the Extirpation of Atheists, who endeavour to deprive the State of so excellent an Instrument of Government. But 'tis strange, that Man, into whose soul *Nature*, *Chance*, or *Necessity*, or what you think fit to call his original

ginary Cause, have breath'd such a Sympathy to Commerce, such an Inclination to Society, should have left him so naked of those Materials that are necessary for carrying on any stable Correspondence, that he is forc'd to have Recourse to Fiction, to flie to Forgery, and to build the whole Frame of mutual Communication on Cheats, that are the Bane of Society, the Plague of Conversation, the Disturbers of Peace, and declar'd Enemies to Order.

Secondly, What *Machiavel* first rais'd this Spirit, that all the Power of Wit pointed with Debauchery, has never been able to conjure down? What great *Nabucodonozor* rear'd up this gigantick Statue of a Deity, and then commanded all People and Nations to fall down and worship it? Where did he keep his Court? In what part of the World did he Reign? In what *Olimpiade* did he Live? A credible Return to these few *Quares* might possibly make some Impression on reasonable Men: But an *Hypothesis* in the Air, that wants the Prop of Proofs, that is sustain'd by meer Conjecture or Possibility, must fall to the Ground: Authority without Reason makes but a lean

lean Figure, and if you intend to win our Faith, first subdue our Understandings.

Thirdly, If the Notion of a Deity be a meer Trick of Statesmen, a sly Invention of Princes; methinks they should not startle at the Monster, they only fram'd to affright others; they may turn their Subjects Fears into Diversion, as well as Profit, and applaud their Cunning for this double Advantage of Obedience, and Pleasure; but we see the contrary; Statesmen are no more secure from Throws of Conscience, than the *Mechanicks*, nor the *Prince*, than the *Peasant*; The Terrors of a God often rise with the *Character*; great Men most dread his Justice, because they most offend his Goodness. I ask then, how those who fourb'd others, became Dupes to their own contrivance? If by *State-Magick* they conjur'd up this Phantom, why do they tremble at it? Did all the Princes of the World dye *intestati*? Without making over this great *arcanum Imperij* to their Successors? Were they cut off in one Night as the First-born of *Egypt*? Or did they intomb this grand Secret with their Bodies? A Man that can swallow these Absurdities, rather wants *Hellebore* than

than Arguments, and I would sooner recommend him to a *Physician* than a *Philosopher*.

Fourthly, That *Hero* of your Faction, the great Mr. *Hobbs*, that able Politician, who wheedled himself first, and then a considerable Part of the Nobility out of Conscience and Religion too: That *Hobbs*, I say, who has left us a Draught of Government, I mean of Atheistical Policy, in *Folio*: Who knows as little what he says, as what he believes, crosses upon your System; he rather lays the Knavery at the Subjects door, than at the Princes, and affirms point blank the setting up of a God was to drive home Liberty, and to pen up Sovereignty, to countenance Disobedience, and to clip the Wings of Authority: *It is impossible*, says he, *a Commonwealth should stand, where any other but the Sovereign, hath a Power of giving greater Reward than Life, and of inflicting greater Punishments than Death; now seeing eternal Life is a greater Reward, than the Life present, and eternal Torment a greater Punishment than the Death of Nature, it is a Thing worthy to be well consider'd of all Men, that desire by obeying Authority to avoid the Calamities of Confusion and*
Civil

Civil War, what is ment in holy Scripture by Life eternal, and Torments eternal; and then he lays before his Reader as fine a Scheme of Life and Death eternal, as a Libertine can Desire, or an Atheist invent: According to this Gentleman, those Princes that first set up the Notion of a God upon political Ends, were but puny Statists, they were as unacquainted with their Interest, as the Maxims of Ruling, for constituting a superiour Power, that could reward more liberally, and punish more severely than they; they suggested new Pretences of Revolt to their Subjects, and shew'd a Secret till then unknown, viz. that on Occasions they might War upon their Leaders, not only without Sin, but even with Merit: For in the Hypothesis of a God, this Maxim is evident, God is to be obey'd before Man; now Experience teaches us that Knaves can easily perswade the Mob, any Injunction of a Prince that lies a little heavy, is against God, and when once this Frenzy has seiz'd upon the Brains of the Vulgar, they flie to Arms, they slay out of Zeal, they butcher their fellow Subjects out of Devotion, and vail the Prerogative to Property, and the Crown
to

to the *Prong* and *Pitch-fork* : These I suppose are the Reasons that move Mr. *Hobbs* to caution Princes against Religion, to question the Rewards of Vertue, and the Punishments of Vice : You see how you reced from the Opinion of Mr. *Hobbs*, and leave your *Patriarch* in the Lurch : It's unkind to treat a Gentleman with so little Ceremony, to whom you owe so much ; he first brought *Atheism* into Credit, and like the Gyant in the Fable, first war'd openly upon Vertue, and then turn'd his Fury against Heaven : He model'd you into a kind of Society, who before rang'd about the World like the wild *Tartars*, or *Arabians*, without Government or Order : 'Twas he first rais'd Impudence to a Science, Frenzy to Wit, and Infidelity to Religion : From him you borrow your Errors, and even Arms to defend em : Why then will you disoblige a Man to whom your whole Fraternity stands indebted ?

In a word, the Belief of a Divinity could never be impos'd on Mankind by the Cunning of any Prince, or Statesman ; for *when one Man attempts to over-reach another, he has Recourse without doubt to Reason ; now I cannot

not perswade my self that Reason can invent a Cheat, that Reason cannot discover ; for it's evident the Belief of a supream Being carries Dread and Terror along with it, it humbles Pride, checks Lewdness, and curbs the pleasing Sallies of Sensuallity ; it prescribes Laws to Interest, and bounds to Pleasure, it restrains Thoughts no less than Actions ; how then can a Man in his Wits presume that upon the bare Proposition of the Doctrine, without any serious Examen, without the Recommendation of plausible Arguments, all Men should swallow the Imposture, and vote the Being of a God at the Expence of their darling and favourite Prerogative Liberty, of their Quiet and Tranquility ? Before you can admit so palpable an Absurdity, you must suppose all Mankind flung up their Reason for Company Sake, or-run mad to keep up the Frolick : You must suppose our Ancestors were of another *Species* than we, that their Inclinations cross'd on ours, that they plac'd their Pleasure not in Enjoyment but Self-denial, their Liberty in Constraint, and their Happiness in trembling.

But

But if you say they embrac'd the Tenets on Grounds, fallacious at Bottom, but glaz'd over with the plausible Varnish of Sophistry and Paralogism; it's strange, that Reason after a hundred Attempts, for the Space of many Ages, has never been able to tear off the Disguise, or to discover the Fallacy that was contrived by Reason: And yet it is more astonishing, that the universal Reason of Mankind has been wretchedly ensnar'd and blinded to so prodigious a Degree, as to take those Proofs for reasonable and solid, which upon the Principles of Atheists, were never able to give any rational Account of God's Existence, either by his Effects or Operations: You cannot believe this, unless you believe that Reason it self is unreasonable, or that the Reason of all the World was over-reach'd by that of one crafty Politician. If you dare venture to clap in with this Absurdity, I must confess your Faith is *Facile* and *Comprehensive* in some Cases, tho' streight-lac'd in others; and you cannot refuse to believe a God, unless you own its in your Power to believe what is morally Impossible, but not what is highly Credible. To conclude, you have unriddled

dled the secret, 'tis a meer *State Engine*, you say, a petty Craft to fright some, and flatter others into Obedience; disband therefore your Fears, run from Conscience, or out-grow it, place Good and Evil on the same Level, for nothing can be Evil below, unless there be a supream Law-giver above. A Child will scream out at its Nurse, under the Disguise of a Vizard, but take it off, and he turns the very Object of Fear into Play and Diversion; You have unmask'd the Fourbery, you have discover'd the Imposture, why have you less Assurance than a Child? Why less Discretion? Why do you still sweat under the Awe of a Deity, and sometimes grown under the Lashes of Conscience? If you have been gull'd into these Frights, discourse your self out of them; Fear and Remorse are not very entertaining: If a Syllogism or two would rid you of these Incumbrances, I would have you try Conclusions: But alas! Your own Breast confutes your Pretensions, when you affirm the Impression of a God is nothing but a Trick, your Tongue trembles together with your Heart, and like a Criminal at the Bar,
you

you avow the Fact by a faint Denyal.

Theom. Your Discourse amounts to this, that no Error can invade and subdue all Mankind : Now can any Thing be imagin'd more universal than Polytheism? Did it not run thro' all Countries, as well as all Times? Did it not sweep away the Rich with the Poor? The Philosopher with the Illiterate? And the Prince with the Peasant? Thro' what Gate did this profane Worship creep into the World? If many God's may be foisted in, why not one? Does the Greatness of the Absurdity facilitate the Imposture? Because a Plurality of God's shocks Reason, more than an Unity, can Reason easier over-look the Contradiction? Does the Cheat lie out of Sight, because a Child may discover it?

Euseb. Polytheism (tho' it spread wide) was never Universal: We know as sure when it was not, and when it begun, as past Transactions can be known: The Memory of Things past can only run down to us thro' the Channel of Tradition; Authors both Sacred and Prophane mark its Origin; it takes its Rise from the Tower of *Babel*, and the first Emperor was Metamorphoz'd into the
first

first Deity : Nor did it infect all People ; some Millions of *Jews* detested the Sacrilege, and there are many probable Conjectures in spight of the *Sorbone*, that the Worship of one God continu'd in *China* two thousand Years : But however since the Birth of Christianity Polytheism has lost Credit and Empire, it only reigns where Ignorance and Barbarity domineer, and those poor Creatures hug the Cheat who are willing to be deceiv'd.

Moreover the Philosophers and wise Men of all Ages and Countries receded from the Multitude in this monstrous Veneration : *Plato* confess'd he was a Polytheist when he spoke in jest, but a *Theist* when he spoke in earnest : *Cicero* rallies the State *Theology*, and drolls upon those Gods in his Books he ador'd in the *Capitol* : *Seneca* burlesques the Multiplicity of Divinities ; and in a word, all the Heathen Divines as well as Poets evidently demonstrate, that those believ'd in many Gods who follow'd Custom, and those in *one* who obey'd Reason : So that, tho' the wise Men were not guilty of the Error, they were of the Sin, because they swam down the Stream with the Vulgar,
they

they burnt Incense to Stones, offer'd Victims to Statues, and approv'd in their Actions what they condemn'd in their Judgment.

Nay if we believe *Tertullian*, the very *Multitude* in their suddain Frights look'd up to Heaven, not the Capitol, and invok'd one God, not many : Whence we may draw with him this Inference, that Nature profess'd one God, whilst Corruption and Ignorance allow'd of *Thirty Thousand* : But besides, in vain you beg Universality of the Vulgar, the Vote of the Multitude separated from the Approbation of the Wise, is no more to be regarded than the Opinion of Bedlams ; their Authority can be of no greater Weight, than that of Children who have Reason but cannot use it : They know as little what they do, as why : They act by no other Rule than Passion or Custom : Like frightened Sheep one treads on the Heels of another, and the Mistake of the First is follow'd by that of the whole Flock : In fine, they judge at Random, take things upon Trust, and stamp Truth and Falshood with the same Impression ; and so leave us no Marks to discover the Imposture.

But

But again, your Argument is so far from enervating my Discourse, that it confirms it : People had never ador'd false Gods, had they not been first perswaded there was a true one ; as a Picture supposes some real Original, so a Counterfeit Excellency supposes a real one : Who would counterfeit *Guineas* if there was no such Coin ? Or cheat the World with false Diamonds if there were no true ones in Nature ? The Heathens ador'd false Gods, I think we may therefore with a great Deal of Probability infer, that Nature taught them there was a true one.

Now it's no hard Task to convince a Man that will stoop to Reason, that Polytheism might easily be set on Foot by Craft, Policy, or Corruption, tho' the Belief of one God could not : First to satisfy the Senses, Men made God *Visible* ; Secondly to content the Imagination, that could not crowd all the Perfections of God in one Idea, they multiply'd the Divinity ; then Blindness growing upon 'em with the Superstition, those Things that were intended to represent his Perfections were apply'd to Men ; and then Darkness seiz'd upon em to that Degree, that they deify'd Diseases,

Diseases, and adored those Obscenities in their Temples, they durst not name in civil Company; lastly, to favour their Passions and to give full Wing to unreasonable Appetites, they plac'd Adulterers in Heaven, Strumpets on Altars, and adored all Vices, that they might be exempt from the Practice of all Virtues; for who durst condemn what they ador'd? Or punish what they worship'd? What Crime might not be committed at Home with Honour and Impunity, that was reverenc'd in the Temples with Prostration and Victims?

But if this Account does not please you, pray attend, and I hope you will receive full Satisfaction. *Polytheism* is a Sin of the deepest Dye, and therefore we cannot imagine Men, plung'd into the very Depth of Wickedness, without previous Dispositions, Crimes like natural Bodies do not shoot out in a Moment, but leasurely, *Nemo repente fit pessimus*: Idolatry like all other monstrous Offences came upon us by Degrees: First Men carv'd Statues, then they honour'd them, and infine ador'd them; and as the Cause of making them was various, so that of deifying them was also; a Father, *says the wise Man,*
af-

afflicted with untimely mourning, when he had made the Image of his Child taken away, now honoured him as a God, which was then a dead Man; and some fell into so desperate an Ignorance, as to erect Statues and Altars to those very Persons they mourn'd for; they constituted Cereimonies for the Dead as Cures for the Grief of the Living. *Sacra facta sunt qua fuerunt assumpta Solatia. Min. Felix.*

In some Places Idolatry sprung from the Pride of Princes, who substituted their Statues to supply their Presence, and commanded their Subjects to pay their Representative the Respect due to their Persons; and this Worship, tho' civil in its Origin, swell'd into Adoration by the servil Flattery of some, and the stupendious Blindness of others, and when once the Gate flew open to Illusion, Idolatry rush'd into the World like a Torrent, and bore down all before it. *Nabucodonozor* would be ador'd whilst he liv'd: *Alexander* obtain'd Worship of the *Persians*, but could not of his *Macedonians*; these to set up their Valour would never own their King was a God, the others deified their Conqueror to palliate the Shame of their

Defeat: The Roman *Cæsars* lov'd rather to be fear'd while they liv'd, than ador'd; they would first die before they would be thought immortal, and pretended no right to Sacrifices till Death cut off all Claim to Government; but then the ignorant Multitude and fawning Magistrate plac'd their Princes above the Stars, and built Temples to those, whom they stabb'd in the Senate, or flung into the Common-Shores.

In other Places, Polytheism and Idolatry came from Gratitude; the People dedicated Statues to those famous Men, who first founded their Cities or improv'd them, who fram'd Laws or invented Arts: And in Process of Time, the exterior Marks of Gratitude became divine Worship: If you doubt of these Occasions, let me recommend to your Perusal *Lactantius*, *Philastrius*, *Arnobius* and *Min. Felix*, and I am confident you will urge no more for Satisfaction: Now if you ask me why the Notion of one God could not be impos'd on Mankind by Ignorance, Stupidity and Custom, as well as Idolatry and Polytheism; I can only desire you to spend a Moments Reflection on what I have said already.

Theom.

Theo. I perceive then you will not admit it Possible, that any Error can be Universal: Pray do not ballance plain Matter of Fact with Speculation: Did not all the World believe the *Antipodes* impossible? And do not the *Clowns* of all Nations to this Day take the *Moon* or *Sun* to be ten times bigger than the *fixt Stars*?

Euseb. Whether an Error can be Universal or no, is not my Concern; tho' *Aristotle* denies it, and tho' it can never be made out by any Fact, that such an Error is possible, yet if a Concession will be any Advantage to your Cause, pray take it; however, I maintain, that the Perswasion of a God cannot possibly be such; and I think that the Assertion is made pretty clear already, yet to satisfy Doubts, and to cut off all Reply, I add an Argument, which has all the Appearance of Conviction.

There is a natural Light in Man's Understanding, that never deceives him; but then there is a Prejudice that always does: Were we exempt from this, we should seldom be in the Wrong, and were we devided of that, we should never be in the Right; we can-

cannot throw our Mistakes on any in-breed Quality of the Intellect, for then, false Judgments would be natural to it, and so we might take up with the Scepticks, and doubt of all Things, or rather we should be assur'd of this alone, that we was always in Error.

There are two Sources of Error, the one Exterior, which may be reduc'd to *Example, Education, and Sophistry*; these exercise a strange Empire on the Understanding, they impose upon it to Admiration, and almost force it into Error by proposing Objects under false Light; hence it comes, that Lewdness in hot Countries; and Drunkenness in cold, pass for *Peccadillo's*, altho' in themselves they are great Offences: The interior Causes are Three, the *Senses, Imagination, and Passion*, and any of these are able to propose Things in borrow'd Colours, and represent 'em to the Understanding quite different from themselves; thus a Star having been represented to us from our Cradle no bigger than a Candle, we have found some difficulty to be disabus'd, not being able to reconcile the small Idea we take from our Sense, to that vast one we receive from Reason; our Imagination
has

has been so imploy'd in Matter, that it gives even Spirits its Proprieties; we are no more able to imagine our Souls without Extension, than a Mountain without a Valley; the Will being engag'd by Passion, byasses the Understanding, and forcing it to judge true whatever stands for our Advantage, leads us into a Thousand Errors, and then 'tis very hard to discover the Mistake, when 'tis our Interest to be deceiv'd: Now, I say, the universal Belief of a God, cannot be ascrib'd either to the exterior Causes of Error, or to the Interior: The first Part of the Assertion stands firm on those Reasons I have already brought; the Second I prove beyond a Possibility of Doubting.

The Belief of a Deity cannot with any colour of Reason be suppos'd to flow from any of these general Origins of Illusion, if it be rather contrary than conformable to 'em, if they rather prompt us to believe there is no God, than that there is one; for what Error can spring from those Causes, that have no Proportion to it, that rather stifle than foment it? Now, I appeal to

Atheists themselves, whether they owe not a great Part of their criminal In-crudeliſy, to Senſe, Imagination; and Corruption of Heart; they have been ſo long accuſtom'd to juggle by Senſe, that they ſeem to have loſt the Faculty of Reaſoning; they reject as Sophiſtry, or empty Speculation whatever cannot fall under Senſation; they tell us they cannot admit God to be the Object of their Faith, becauſe he cannot be that of their Senſe; their Imagination is loſt in the Survey of his Eternity, and Immenſity, they cannot frame to themſelves any tolerable Idea of his Eſſence, nor what he did, nor where he was before the World's Creation, and then this *Nonplus* of the Imagination puzzles the Underſtanding, and ſo they deny his Being, becauſe they do not conceive his Eſſence, Attributes and Occupation: In fine, the tainted Inclinations that tyrannize over the Heart, level all their Engines againſt God's Exiſtence, becauſe this Truth curbs their Insolence, and if it does not correct their Irregularity, at leaſt it abates their Violence.

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Let therefore all the World, if you please, for many Ages deny the *Antipodes*, let 'em believe the *first Stars* are no bigger than the Flame of a Taper, or that the Moon equals the Sun; the very *Hypothesis* favours me; this universal Mistake assures me almost above Demonstration, that those who confess a God are not deluded: For six thousand Years the Senses have brought Negative Arguments against the Existence of a Divinity, Imagination has conjur'd up a hundred Difficulties, and throw as many Prejudices in our way, the extream Wickedness of most Men has made *no God* their Interest, nay it has conquer'd their Desires, and corrupted their Wishes: Yet in Spight of Sense, in Spight of Imagination; maugre all the Bribes of Sensuality, the Flattery of Appetite, and Violence of Passions, that always raise Doubts in the Face of Evidence, in the Presence of Demonstration, the Belief of a God has stood unshaken, it has subdu'd the most Obdurate, enlighten'd the most Stupid, skar'd the most Profligate, and overcome the most Rebellious; all Nations, in all Ages, have acknowledg'd his Being;

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ing ; and even those who pretend to be Atheists cannot clear themselves of Doubts, their Fears are more certain than their Judgment, and they quake before the *Nothing* they laugh at.

Judge now whether the Belief of a God can be the Effect of Prejudice, seeing it wars upon the very Principles of Error, and maintains its Empire over the Judgments of Men, meerly because no Prejudice can withstand it. I conclude therefore, this universal Consent, this harmonious Concord of Men in Customs different, opposite in Interest, and almost contrary the one to the other in Complexion, as well as Features, cannot proceed from any Thing, but the Conviction of a Truth, God breath'd into our Souls when he espous'd 'em to our Bodies, he twisted it with our Nature, and so has fenc'd it against the Assaults of Time, Custom and Inclination, he has assur'd it against false Intelligence of Sense, and the confounding Impression of Imagination : You may as soon debauch the Sun out of the *Zodiack*, as this indeleble Truth out of your Heart, or dispute an *Ethiopian* white, as reason a God into a *Chymara* :

Chymera: No Armour is Proof against the Point of this Truth, there is no Shelter against the Force of this invincible Argument. *Opinionum commenta delet dies. Naturæ judicia confirmat*, Time wears out the Fictions of Opinion, and unmasks the Falsity of ill founded Perswasions, but then it corroborates the Dictates, confirms the Judgment of Nature: and when a Notion has stood the Tryal of all Nations, and endur'd the Test of all Ages, 'tis a Sign it springs from Nature, not from Caprice, or Illusion.

DIALOGUE XV.

From the universal Consent of Nations, it follows, that this Proposition there is a God can be no more Doubtful than this, there was such a Man as Caesar.

Theom. **Y**OU fancy, I suppose, I am come over to you, and turn'd a through-pac'd Convert; you have ply'd me sufficiently with Words, but not at all with Reasons.

Euseb. 'Tis easier to asperse Truth, than to confute it: When I began the Conference, if you remember, I engag'd my self to give you convincing Proofs of a God, but not Wit to understand them: I have done my Part, and if they make no Impression, you must accuse either your Incapacity, or Obstinacy, not the Weakness of the Argument. A Man that has no Eyes, or shuts 'em may grope in the Dark at Noon-day, and if he blunders into a Precipice, he must discharge the Sun, and lay his Misfortune on the Indisposition of the Organ,

Organ, or the Folly of his own Will: I have discover'd Truth, and laid it as open as Demonstration will permit, now you very gravely tell me, you can't discern it; you may at the same Rate accuse *Euclide*, and turn his Demonstrations into Paralogisms, you may say *Pythagoras* has sham'd human Reason with his famous Discovery, and that he was too liberal when he gave a *Hecatomb* for a Sophism. I tell you again, I have not assaulted your Judgment with Fallacy or Sophism, but with naked Truth: A Child may see it, and no Man of Reason can deny it; 'tis too evident to be over-look'd, and too strong to be withstood; you may as well doubt whether there was such a Prince as *Cesar*, as call in question the Being of a Deity.

Theo. Hold there: I no more doubt of *Cesar's* Being, than of my own, 'tis not in my power to dissent from either.

Euseb. I suppose you make this publick Confession to avoid Singularity, or that some under-hand Design has greater stroke in your Concession, than Conviction.

Theo.

Theo. Nothing but Evidence draws out the Confession; I cannot doubt when Demonstration assures me, and I must waver, if bare Conjectures support me.

Euseb. Pray, by which Proposition of Mathematicks do you demonstrate *Cesar* was.

Theo. You are in a Vein of Bantering surely; past Matters of Fact neither require, nor are capable of Mathematical Proofs, they are not to be made out by *Sines* or *Tangents*, they stand on the *Basis* of Authority, and are only convey'd to our Knowledge by Tradition: Now I suppose the joint Consent of all Men, and all Ages, is able to make any past Transaction credible.

Euseb. Your Arithmetick runs too high; what do you talk of all Men? The tenth Part of Mankind has heard less of *Cesar*, than of *Domingo's* Voyage to the Moon: If you send *Hue* and *Cry* after this great Conqueror into the Country, nine Parts of ten will take him sooner for a Highway-man, than an Emperor, and rather suppose he had taken a Purse, than conquer'd the World: Other Countries of *Europe* are as little acquainted

acquainted with this Hero as ours: He is absolutely lost to *China* and *Japan*; his Feats never swam over into *America*, and his Obscurity even in *Asia* and *Africa* is far greater than his Renown; his Memory is only confin'd to Books it lives among Pedants and School-Boys.

Theom. 'Tis true, but the Tradition tho' not physically Universal, is morally so; and this suffices to make the Fact certain.

Euseb. Nay Sir! I am absolutely for you, and did you not believe there was such a Man as *Cesar*, I should perswade you to turn *Anchoret*, to take up in Forests, and forswear all human Society; for in Reality, you would be as ill rigg'd out for Conversation as *Buffloes* or *Buz-zards*; but then if upon less Grounds you believe there has been such a Man as *Cesar*, why do you refuse to believe a God upon greater?

Theom. What? Do you pretend the Motives that prove a God, are more cogent, than those that prove *Cesar* has been?

Euseb. I do: For not a tenth Part of the World has ever heard of *Cesar*, and every Man from the first Origin
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of Things, I say every Man, that has been able to discourse, to link together Antecedents and Consequences, has confess'd there is a supreme Being; so that if we appeal to Number, and put the Issue of the Controversy to Vote, the Being of a God carries the Day: As there is no Proportion between the Authority that stands for *Cesar*, and that which stands for God, so there can be no Comparison between the Certainty of the one, and of the other.

Besides, those who attest *Cesar has been*, had no Interest to deny it; they got no more by his Being, than by his not Being; the one did not advance their Fortune, nor the other recoil it: But a considerable Part of those who avouch for a God, were interested in his *not Being*, they were Men sunk in Lewdness, and lost in Debauchery, their Hands were dyed in Blood, Rapine and Sacrilege, and their Hearts defil'd with the most crying Abominations; they wish'd there were no God, because they liv'd as if there were none; their Interest voted him down, yet their Judgments could not. The Wrack of their wounded Consciences told them, there was a God; and tho' they apprehended his

Justice, they had not the Boldness to disown It: If therefore those Men deserve more Credit, who speak against their own Interests, than those who do not, this single Circumstance makes the Being of a God more certain, than that of *Cesar*.

Theom. There is *Excedens* and *Excessus*, if we go to Polling, you may perchance gain the Suit, but if to Evidence, the Cause is mine. The Authority of a few built on Evidence weighs Ten Times more than the Authority of many destitute of Reason. Thus the Case stands between you and me; more Witness for God, than for *Cesar*, but then the Authority of those who maintain a God is supported by fancy alone and Caprice.

Euseb. That is, all Men espoused the Belief of a God without Reason. What? Can a Man affirm such an amazing Impossibility, and boggle at any Thing? A wise Man may sometimes be impos'd on by subtle Appearances, he may grasp a Shadow for the Substance, and take counterfeit Reason as well as a counterfeit Coin: But to say all Mankind took up the Belief of a God on a Frolick, without Reason, nay against the
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Interest of the greater Part, is to suppose them struck at a Clap with the Spirit of Folly and Madneſs; 'tis to ſuppoſe them irrational, and by Inference not Men; and what can Fancy frame more prodigious, than that a Man of Parts ſhould believe this Epidemical Lunacy without any Ground or Reaſon. If *Caprice* has ſent about this Frolick; if it has poſted it away to every Corner of the habitable World; methinks we have right to expect it may play little Pranks in things of an other Nature. Why have the Gentry never yet flung *Teuxbury Muſtard Balls* into their own Houſes, and toſs'd the Frenzy thro' the whole Nation? Why have they never conſpired the Ruin of Vinters by with-drawing their Cuſtom, or ſurpreſs'd the *Inns* of Court by composing Law Suits *a l' amiable*? Could we ſee *Aſſociations* carry on theſe petty Frolicks, we might perchance have ſome Inclination to think more Universal were poſſible, but till you give me an Inſtance, you muſt pardon my Incredu-
dility.

Now 'tis Time to take into Conſideration your pretended Advantage: The Proofs *for Caſar's Being* are reſolv'd, ſay
you,

you, into the Evidence of Sense, those for God's Existence are not, therefore the Authority that stands for *Cesar*, exceeds that which stands for God, in the same Proportion that certitude drawn from the Perceptions of Sense, surpasses the Certitude taken from any other Faculty.

First, Supposing the Evidence which stands for *Cesar* be greater, 'tis false *Logick* to conclude that the Evidence of a God, grounded on the most universal Consent, that ever was in the World, is insufficient to secure a wise Man from Doubt: For certainly something below supream Evidence will suffice; and if you will not grant me this, it evidently follows, you can be sure of Nothing but what you see; for the Experience of your own Eyes is ten times more convincing than that of another, let it be apply'd to you by the most full Authority than can be imagin'd.

Secondly, You cannot refuse your Assent to the Existence of a God upon account that the universal Authority of Mankind is not founded on Sensation: For then you undermine, and blow up the Foundation of *Atheism*, and *Apostate* from

from Incredulity; for either you are an *Epicurean*, or *Aristotelian* Atheist, *id est*, you believe the World was compos'd by Chance of Atoms, or was *ab aeterno*. Take which you please; if the First, pray tell me, did you ever see those *Atoms*? Did you ever view their Motion? Was you present, when they danc'd the Hay? Or produc'd the World by a Turn of *Barnaby*? Did at least either *Epicure*, or *Democritus* assure their Scholars they saw this Scuffle? Can they tell us the Names of their Generals? The Number of their Squadrons? Or Battallions? How long the Conflict lasted? And upon what Articles the Peace was agreed on? If the Second, I desire to know what ocular Certainty you have of the World's Eternity; could any Man be present at this strange Production before he was, *id est*, could he exist before Eternity? These things go down with *Atheists* without chewing, without examining; they believe 'em tho' no body ever saw 'em, and what is yet more admirable, without any Authority to recommend 'em, nay in Spight of Authority, and against the most evident Conviction of Reason; but when the

Question

Question is to believe a God upon the universal Consent of all Nations, back'd with all the Force of Reason, they beg our Pardon, they cannot captivate their Understanding to the Belief of a Thing that has never been seen? Is this to build on *Principles*? Yes, without doubt; you treat *Principles* as the Presbyterians did the Government in *Forty Two*, who pretended to settle it on a stable Bottom, yet fairly over-turn'd it.

Thirdly, Did you not tell me, you requir'd such Proofs only for a God as the Matter was capable of? That he must be a Fool, or a Madman, that would not believe there was such a Place as *Constantinople*, unless it could be demonstrated by Mathematicks? Or deny'd a God, because he did not see him? For to believe the Being of *Constantinople* upon no other Terms than *Demonstration*, or of God upon no Evidence but that of Sense, is to require a Conviction not possible; for God cannot be seen by a corporal Eye, nor can the Being of *Constantinople* be evidenc'd by *Euclide*: So that the Authority for a God cannot be enervated, because it is not resolv'd into Sense: For suppose he did exist, and striv'd to

to manifest himself to Mankind, he never could expose his Essence to the Eye, so that you must either say such a corporal Testimony is not necessary for a through Conviction of his Being, or that his Omnipotency cannot sufficiently manifest it ; take which you will ; that cuts off your Retreat, and this plunges you into the Abyfs of Absurdity and Blasphemy.

Fourthly, Tho' *Caesar* was the Object of Sense, this Circumstance cannot possibly have any Influence on your Belief: This stands meerly on the Basis of Authority ; for if I ask you, why you believe there was such a Man as *Caesar* ? You must answer, because *Tully* and others liv'd and convers'd with him: If I enquire farther how you know they liv'd and convers'd with him ? You must reply, because they say so in their Writings: So that the ultimate Motive of your Belief, is their Authority, partly deriv'd to you by their Books, partly by the concurring Testimony of interveining Ages ; and this will appear more palpably, if we suppose *Tully* and the rest of those Authors, who tell us they were particularly acquainted with *Caesar* in reality never knew him, and
so

to impos'd on the next Age, which propagated the Cheat by a continual Tradition down to our Days : For still in this *Hypothesis* you would believe there was such a Man as *Cesar*. Why ? Because you have the same Authority, so that their seeing *Cesar*, or not seeing him, has no influence on your Assent, their Word and Credit alone sways your Judgment.

But, *Lastly*, I say that God has been both seen, and heard, as much as a Spirit can possibly be of *those* Senses, and so the Authority for a God is not only of a farther extent than that for *Cesar*, but it also leans on Reason, and what makes most for our present Purpose on the *Evidence* and *Conviction* of Sense.

Theom. This indeed is a hardy Undertaking, and worthy of such a *Hero*; if you bring it to a happy Conclusion, you will undermine *Atheism*, or at least confound it : But I doubt of the Success; and I fear your Enterprise will vanish into Miscarriage.

Euseb. For all that, Sir; I do not despond : Your prophetick Enthusiasm will prove in the End as fallible, as your Reasons, and you will be as much
out

out of your Prognostication, as your Philosophy.

I will not here insist upon all the Appearances God has been pleas'd to make in this World, since he created it: I single out one, which Infidelity it self must believe: 'Tis recorded in the 19th Chapter of *Exodus*, and happen'd three Months after that miraculous Delivery of the Children of *Israel* from the Servitude of the *Egyptians*. I do not pretend to impose this Book on your Belief, as the Word of God; you might then perchance accuse me of your own Faults, and say I only prove the *Thesis* by begging the Question in Debate: Take it as a Story, and fling it not among the Fables, till you have prov'd it one.

When the Host of *Israel*, says *Moses*, came into the Desert of *Sina*, it encamp'd in the same place, just against the Mountain; then God commanded *Moses* to tell the People, that within three Days he would descend upon the Mountain, and talk to the Army: The third Day the Clouds began to gather, Thunder roar'd, Lightning flash'd, and a celestial Trumpet struck all the Army with Fear and Amazement; then God

God came down in the Shape of Fire, and the whole Mountain open'd a Scene of Terror; the Army trembled, and all the *Jews* sunk under the awing Majesty of their Creator, they heard his Voice, they saw the Flames that environ'd him, they were both dazled, and frighted with his Glory, and so deputed *Moses* to know his Will; and to receive his Commands: He took his Brother *Aaron*, and seventy two others, who all saw the God of *Israel*; he trod on a footstool compos'd of Sapphires like a serene Skie. This is in substance the Narration of *Moses*, and the Circumstances of this glorious Apparition: It could not be a Trick of State to fright the *Mobile* into Obedience, no subtle Invention contriv'd in a Closet, or resolv'd on at a Counsel-Table; here was no acting under Board, or out of Sight, three Millions of Men were Spectators, and that they might not afterwards take it for a Dream, or suspect it for Illusion, it continu'd many Days, so that they had time for Examen, and Criticism.

Now I argue thus; there was, you say, such a Man as *Cesar*, and you believe it, because *that* Tradition which conveys

conveys down to you this Truth, is resolv'd into Sense which cannot be deceiv'd; but a more universal Tradition conveys down to us the Being of a God, and this may be also resolv'd into Sense; therefore the Authority for a God is greater than that for *Cesar*; therefore if upon Authority resolv'd into Sense, you believe there was such a Man as *Cesar*, upon a more universal Authority resolv'd also into Sense, you may, and ought believe there is a God,

Theom. I suppose, if there be a God, he is neither Smoak nor Fire; if then those old Gentlemen saw Smoak and Fire only, they could not see God; nay he is neither made of Saphirs, nor falls under Shape or Figure.

Euseb. What does this Answer prove, but that *Atheists* use their Reason to abuse it? You cry out for Evidence of Sense, I send you to *Moses* for satisfaction, you read a Piece of the 19th Chapter, shut the Book, and then with great Coolness tell me, the *Israelites* saw not God but Fire and Smoak; and 'tis true; but God was under that Fire and Smoak; he has no Organs, yet fram'd a Voice; and how will you have him
manifest

manifest himself to Sense but by something that lies within the Sphere of Sense? Alas, Sir, a Spirit is too thin to entertain our Eyes or Ears, 'tis remov'd out of their Ken, the one fastens on Colours, and the other on sound, and both bring us Intelligence from Matter: If such Evidence will not satisfy you, all I can say is, Atheists are a stubborn Generation, and nothing but Hell Fire will render them supple; we may pray for them indeed, but cannot hope to convert them.

But, Sir those Gentlemen who convers'd with *Cesar*, what did they see?

Theom. What should they see but *Cesar*.

Euseb. Was *Cesar* a Substance, or a Complex of Accidents?

Theom. You have left the Pulpit to sit in the Chair of the Scornor, because you cannot reason me into an Imperinance, you will try to laugh me into one. Well, *Cesar* was a Substance, as we are.

Euseb. I suppose he was neither Colour nor Sound.

Theom. That is certain.

Euseb. And pray what have you ever seen, but Colour? Or what have you ever heard, but Sound? By your own Confession therefore *Cæsar* has neither been seen nor heard? so that we are still upon pretty equal Terms. I do not say this Comparison runs on all Four, there may be found some Disparity, but it will not invalidate the Retortion: For I find no Difference, but that those Accidents *Cæsar* appear'd under, were natural to him, whereas those that invested the Divinity were not.

Theom. Pray satisfy a Doubt or two; the Story is stale, and being toss'd about three Thousand Years, probably lost nothing. Again this strange Passage might be foisted into the Text by a crafty Rabby; and in Time, what Assurance have you the Fact is true.

Euseb. First, the story is ancient; true: But then Antiquity and Truth are not I hope incompatible; tho' Pictures may misrepresent by Nearness or Distance, History has no such nice Point as *Prospective*: If it had, *Atheism* would lie under no Favourable Circumstances, it would have no Play for it self, no, not the Skirmish of Atoms, or the World's eternal Duration: For without Doubt,
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the Battle between these invisible Legions was fought before *Moses's* Days; and then 'tis pretty clear, Eternity is of a staler Date than *Exodus*: If therefore the Antiquity of the story startles your Belief, the Relation of the World's Beginning by the fortuitous Coition of Atoms, or its independant Existence from Eternity puzzles mine: 'Tis ridiculous and unreasonable to except against a Fact or Book, merely because they are ancient; for if the Exception be receivable, you must fling up all Right to your *Cesar*, we must shake Hands with *Livy*, giving up *Plutarch*, and confine our Reading as well as Credit to new *Almanacks* or *Gazetts*.

Again, a Fact that has brav'd Time, that has stood the Criticism of four Thousand Years, and triumph'd over all the Examens of intervening Ages, carries a certain Air of Truth, that makes Impression on the most obdurate Understanding; whereas upstart Facts are rather examin'd by Passion than Reason, they are maintain'd and deny'd by opposite Interests; both Sides raise a Dust, and then in the Dark, tis hard to distinguish Truth from Falshood. The very Story I mentioned has sharpened the

316 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

Pens and exercis'd the Wits of all Ages; all those Pagan Philosophers that entred the Lists against Christianity, first struck at the *Pentateuch*, they aim'd at the Jewish Law, to wound that of *Jesus Christ*; but their Attempts were baulk'd, they fell in the Enterprize; and when they could not disprove the Fact, they blacken'd it, and ascribed that to the Power of Magick, what could only be the Effect of the Omnipotent. You have the Liberty to Steer by their Example, you may father this Apparition on the Devil, but then what will you gain but Confusion? For if you admit a Devil directly, you grant a God by Illation; a Devil and a God, are in a Manner *Correlatives*.

To the second; if this Apparition might be foisted in by a crafty *Rabby*; by the same Reason all those Passages in ancient Authors where *Cesar* is mentioned, might have been foisted in also, so that if a bare Possibility has Force against me, it has as much against you: Besides if we consider the Care the Jews took to avoid such Surprises, we may be morally assur'd, no Corruption, no Alteration, could possibly be contriv'd: Twelve Copies were taken for the

the Twelve Tribes, then every Tribe drew as many more, as there were particular Synagogues in each Tribe, nor was this Task committed to the Care of private Copies, but to Notaries, Scribes, and Overseers appointed by publick Authority; when every Copy was review'd by the whole Congregation, 'twas laid up in the Treasury of the Temple, under divers Locks, nor was it lawful for any without Commission to touch them: Besides to obviate Falsifications, the Laws of the Land punish'd with present Death those, who should dare to add, to diminish, alter or corrupt the sacred Text: What can secure a Book more against Corruptions, than so great a Circumspection, so great a Caution? or can you prove that any profane Historian, was fenced so strongly against the Assaults of Time? Or the Mistakes of Ignorance or Malice?

To the third; I have all the Assurance the Fact is true, as the Thing is capable of, without a special Revelation: It was not acted in Darkness, but in the Sight of three Millions of Men: This Spectacle mixt with Terror and Majesty, did not flash by, like a

Lightning, but continued many Days; So that the People laid not under a Surprise, but had Time to call all Things to a cool Examen: Again this Apparition mov'd them to receive a Law clogg'd with Ceremonies and fill'd with Precepts: We may easily suspect the Presence of their Master, rather forced them to except it, than their Inclination, and that they submitted to the Yoak with Regret, because they cast it off in a Moment. Now what three Millions saw and heard *Moses* committed to Writing; than he read the whole Law to the People, who swore to obey it: From these Spectators partly by written Tradition, and partly by Oral, we have receiv'd the Fact; some have defended the Truth of the whole Book with their Blood, and the most learned Men of the World with their Pens. What greater Proof can, not Reason only, but Obstinacy require? Compare the Certainty you have of *Cesar*, with the Evidence I have brought for this, and you will find it inferior: Three Millions saw God and hear'd him, not half that Number had a Sight of *Cesar* in all Probability, and as few ever heard his Voice: The Authority
for

for the one, is at least as great, as that for the other : No Man had any interest to deny *Cesar*, a thousand to deny the Books of *Moses* ; they have endeavoured to suppress, and confute them, Emperours have pointed the *Pagan* Arguments with Swords, Racks, and the Horror of most cruel Torments, yet Christians without Number, have rather expos'd their Bodies to the Flames, than those Books to the Fury of Executioners, they chose rather to loose their Lives than deny those Truths they contain'd : Now must not those People be pretty sure who who prove Truths with their Blood ? Who defend Facts, not with a Syllogism, but the Torture ? And press home their Arguments with suffering ? This way of Dispute perchance may not agree with your Temper, and (I believe) you would rather deliver up your *Cesar*, than hang for him ; but however, you may measure the Value other Men put on their Lives, by the Price you rate your own at, and you may conclude, they would never part with them without good Reason, and an urgent necessity : In fine, we may safely presume, the Fact is true, becaule all Antiquity has

thought so, and 'tis madness to oppose our Passion, or reason against the Reason of the Christian World.

Theom. You grant some have question'd those Books : and by consequence the Fact in controversy. But no body has been so abandon'd of common Sense, as to start a Doubt about the Being of *Cesar* ; therefore if a Fact never question'd be more certain than one that has been controverted in spite of all your Arguments : 'Tis more certain there was such a Man as *Cesar* ; than that God appear'd to the People of *Israel*.

Euseb. The questioning the Fact does not take off from its certainty ; unless the Motives on which it stands be found doubtful, and weak upon Trial. Is the Possibility of Motion less certain because *Zeno* deny'd it ? Is this Principle *quid libet est vel non est* less evident because some doting Philosophers abjur'd it ? Are you tempted to say Snow is black because a Fool affirm'd it ? No Sir : In spite of those silly Coxcombs, these things stand still upon their ancient Bottom ; and will, till Men pull out their Eyes, or turn off their Reason. If the Being of *Cesar*

far has ever been brought to examen; 'tis because Mankind has no interest in him: Whether he was, or was not, brings no alteration into the World: Things go on after the same Method in either Hypothesis: And tho' indeed he made some Figure eighteen hundred Years ago, he makes none at present, but on the Stage: But did a Gentleman put in Claim to some Estate in Vertue of a Grant from *Julius Caesar*, our Lawyers would not only plead Prescription against it: But prove by the Statues even of *William the Third*, his famous Expedition into *Britanny* was the pure Invention of *Recusants*: Enemies to the Government; nay, that the very Person is Fiction, Imposture, and Design. 'Tis more certain there was such a Man as *Caesar*, than that God appear'd to the People of *Israel*.

A Gentleman in some disorder fetching up a great Sigh: Alas Sir, said he to *Eusebius*! What do you mean? Why raise you Ghosts from the other World to haunt poor Creatures? And have no Power to conjure them down? Must our Torment make up your Diversion? Can't you be pleas'd unless we are frightened? Nor at ease unless we groan upon the Torture? The most happy

Life deserves rather pitty than envy : And what we can procure by a thousand Cares, is only to render our selves less miserable? Why then do Divines continually importune us with strange discoveries of another World? Why damp they our Pleasure with Stories of Hell? And terrify our Imagination with gasty Landskips of a tormenting Eternity? Either prove these amazing Tenets so clearly that we cannot deny 'em, or promise silence, that we may not hear 'em. Your Arguments raise Doubts, but cannot quell 'em; they allurum my Fears, but have not the Power to dissipate 'em.

Alas Sir (reply'd *Eusebius*) what would the Silence of Divines avail, unless you cou'd gag Nature? And silence your Conscience? Tho' you flie from the Commerce of Men: Tho' you mew your self up in Rocks, and Dens; the very Stones proclaim his Being: The Winds whisper it; and Solitude protests you are within God's Dominion. *Omnes homines vident Deum*; the very Blind see him; and the Deaf hear him.

'Tis

'Tis strange (answer'd the Gentleman) that so many flashing Wits, in the Court, and Town, shou'd overlook so long this Divinity, which stands before 'em. Must they put out their Eyes to see him? Or turn Fools to find him?

I doubt not (said *Eusebius*) but *White-Hall* and *Kensington* are well stock'd with Wits. I grant the Town is not unprovided: But then I maintain their blindness proves a God; and that Infidelity is a just punishment of their Crimes. For make a Survey of all those Wits; and you will find them not only without Grace, but almost without Conscience. So soon as their Reason bloom'd, they prostituted their Innocence, and shew'd they were Men by acting like Devils, as *Alexander* counted the Battles he fought by the Wounds he receiv'd. So these may calculate up the Moments of their Lives by the Enormities they commit. Every Action affronts Nature; and cries aloud for Vengeance. If therefore there be an Author of Nature, is it not just he should take the Cause of Nature in hand? And revenge the Injury on those that did it? And what more terrible
Revenge

Revenge can he take? Then to strike those blasphemous *Salmoaneans*; those impure *Sordanapolus.s* as he did the *Sodomites* with the Spirit of blindness. *Per-cussit eos cacitate a minimo usque ad maximum*: Then to withdraw the Light of his divine Face from their Eyes; and so to permit them to walk in darkness and ignorance; and then only to acknowledge their Errors, when they feel the Punishment of their Crimes.

Now that their Infidelity cannot proceed either from want of Motives, or of Wit, 'tis pretty evident. They have the Consent of Mankind, *id est*, of Nature; They have the Confession of their Consciences from within. The Testimony of every Creature from without. These glair such a Light on the most stupid Understanding, that they cannot resist the Force of the Impression. Your *First rate* Wits of the Court examen (you say) all those Arguments, they contemplate the great World, and the less; they turn up every Stone; ransack every corner of the Universe, without being able to discover any Traces of a Deity what can you infer? But that there is a God above, who takes an Inventory of the Actions of the Children
of

of Men, who punishes their Rapines, their Impurities and Blasphemies *here* by confounding their Judgments, who casts such a Gloom over their Understandings, that they cannot see what Children discern, that they grope in darkness, whilst they walk in light, and call out for Proofs of his Being whilst they are surrounded, and almost oppress'd with Demonstrations. In a word, Sir, do not conclude there is no God, because the topping Genius's of the Court do not see him, say rather there is one, because they do not see what all the World both civiliz'd and unciviliz'd, see and adore, say their Ignorance is a just Punishment of their scandalous and provoking Offences, and that the only Way left these abandon'd Debauches to come to the Knowledge of God, is to take off the Curse by flying to Repentance.

He was going on, but *Theamachus* interrupted him; 'tis time (said he) to sound a Retreat, we have been this Morning on hot service; after some Civilities *Eusebius* left the Company, and the next Day took up again the Conference, which continu'd some Days.

D I A L O G U E XVI.

The second Proof drawn from the Existence of the World, which by unquestionable Authority is shown to have been made.

Euseb. **I** Have prov'd the Existence of a God, from the innate Characters of his Being, stamp'd on the Hearts of Men, I come now to a second Proof which he has laid before our Eyes, that he might convince our Senses as well as our Reason, and manifest himself by his Works to the incredulous Seeing he cannot appear in Person. We see a most stately Fabrick call'd the World, vast in Extent, and admirable for Beauty : The Earth is stock'd with innumerable Beasts, the Air with Birds, the Sea with Fishes ; some seem made meerly for Man's Profit, others for his Pleasure, and many for Ostentation. The Firmament glitters with a thousand Luminaries, their Bulk vies with their Lustre, and their Beauty with both : The Sun dazels

us with his Glory, and over-powers our feeble Eyes with an excess of Majesty, it's the grand Arbitrator of Time, it divides Moments into Ages, Years, Months and Days; it regulates Seasons, prescribes bounds to Winter, and limits to Summer, and by its access and recess makes 'em. The Moon with her bright Legions of Stars, that Spangle the Firmament, gilds Darkness, and silvers over those Shades of Horror, and so turns Night it self into a Theatre of Pleasure: But what raises my Amazement, is that this gigantick Machine, is compos'd of almost infinite Parts; yet all are so artificially contriv'd, that one fits exactly the other; nay, they are endow'd with contrary Inclinations, they are always at variance, they draw into the Field one against the other, yet those particular Fewds hinder not an universal Peace, nor those private Discords a general Harmony. Now, Sir, I ask you from whence this glorious Piece of Architecture came; who laid the Foundations of the Earth? Who rais'd the towring Mountains? And hung those vast resplendent Bodies of the Sun, Moon, and Stars in those liquid Regions above?

bove? Who azur'd the Firmament?
 Who enamel'd the Meadows with a
 Thousand different Flowers, that em-
 balm the Air, ravish the Skie, and per-
 fume the Smell?

Theom. Indeed the World is a lovely
 Fabrick, and the Contrivance seems ad-
 mirable, so that some have father'd the
 Work upon an infinite Wisdom: I
 confess this Opinion is more plausible
 than true; it goes down with the un-
 thinking Vulgar, yet Men who hate
 to take things upon trust, who stick
 not on outward appearances, but fol-
 low Effects up to their Origin, are of
 a different Sentiment.

Some say it caus'd it self; but, me-
 thinks, this a Piece of the rudest Non-
 sense that ever was invented, it makes
 a Thing act before it was; and gives
 a Being before it had any: Nay, it
 supposes a Thing to be, and not to
 be, the same Instant; and so allows of
 a Contradiction, which is to out-shoot
 Absurdity it self.

Others are inclin'd to *Epicure's* and
Democritus's System; these say the Mat-
 ter is eternal, which having an infinite
 Space to sport in, began to Scower a-
 bout, and after a thousand Encounters
 by

by a most happy Casualty, chop'd upon this regular Frame : Indeed a Man must be of a very credulous Complexion, that can swallow this Folly ; 'tis to loose Time to enter upon a Confutation ; methinks, sometimes we might see Books compos'd by Chance, as well as this great *Folio* of the World ; and Pictures also may start up by sprinkling the Colours at random.

Others infine maintain the World is eternal *a se* without any other Cause but its own Nature ; 'tis a necessary Being, and independent, and as it had no Beginning, so it can never have an End : 'Tis in vain to run after a Cause distinct [from its own Nature, it is its own Architect and Work, the one is the same with the other. To these Philosophers I give my Approbation, this is my Sentiment ; you have liberty to bring your Exceptions against it.

Euseb. I say the World was made in Time, an infinite Being drew it out of the State of pure Possibility, and plac'd it in that of Actuality : His Power stretch'd out the Heavens, and spread a Canopy of Azure, embroidered with Stars, over the Earth : Wisdom contrived the Parts, and with a stupendious
Artifice

Artifice put them together: His Goodness prompted him to communicate himself to a Multitude of Creatures: His Prudence mark'd out the Employment of every Part of the Creation; it assign'd them their Work, and appointed them their Stations. Supposing there was a God, this Account would be very reasonable, for this great Work would not exceed the Skill of the Workman, Infinite in Wisdom, Power and Goodness.

Now the present Controversy can be decided only by two Ways; either by Authority or Reason. If therefore Authority stands for me, and not at all for you, if solid Reason takes my Side, and wholly abandons yours, and if besides you are not only deserted by Reason, but press'd by those very Difficulties, or greater you oppose me with, I hope you will be so just to Reason and your self, as to come over to Truth, and to confess and adore, that God you now deny. Let me therefore ask you, is your own Opinion back'd with Authority.

Theom. I confess the Authority is not full nor cogent, yet all Ages have furnish'd Men, who stood up for the World's Eternity: Neither indeed ought

we to put the Issue of the Cause upon Authority, in such an endless Series of Ages, many unforeseen and unavoidable Accidents may easily have interrupted the Course of Tradition, as Plagues and Innundations which without Doubt have more than once almost depeopled the World, and turn'd it into a Solitude: Besides, want of Tradition for the World's Eternity rather proves it was Eternal than not; for if the World was always peopled, there could be no common Spring from whence the Tradition should first rise, and then spread over the Universe.

Euseb. I grant the Worlds Eternity may have found Abettors in most Ages, but their Authority is insufficient; they were a certain kind of fanatick Philosophers like our Atheists, who lived on Fancy, an opin'd by Imagination; they examin'd Facts by caprice, and founded their Tenets on meer Conjectures; but yet their Opinion favours not yours. For tho' *Aristotle* was a great Stickler for the World's Eternity, and as he confesses, the first of all Philosophers, that broach'd the Whym; yet he acknowledges 'twas made by God and flowed from his Power, as Light from
the

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the Sun; yet this *Hypothesis* seem'd so opposite to the receiv'd Opinion of all Greece that an Action of Blasphemy was brought in against him *Conimb. l. 8. Phys. c. 2. quod unum Deum docuisset contra Patrios ritus de Idolis & multitudine Deorum, & quod Mundum sempiternum enunciasset, quem initio Temporis conditum tota Græcia putabat*: And the Epicureans who held the Matter Eternal, thought it far more consonant to Reason, to leave the rare Contrivance and Disposition of the World to Chance, which finish'd and put the last Hand to this Admirable Architecture in Time, than to ascribe its Origin to any inherent Independency,

*Si nulla fuit Genitalis Origo
Terrarum & Cæli, semperq; aterna fuere,
Cur supra bellum Thebanum & funera Troja
Non alias alij quoq; res cecinere Poeta.*

Thus an Epicurean Poet.

and I think I may defy you to produce one ancient Philosopher, one Man of Sense that ever durst take upon him the Defence of your *Thesis*; and yet we scarce find any other Absurdity without an Advocate, but to clap Independency on a Being whose Perfections are confin'd

fm'd seem too monstrous an Enterprize to wise Men, so contrary to the first Principles of Reason, that they durst not undertake it. You do therefore well to put your Cause upon Reason, for you must loose it, if you stand to the Verdict of Tradition: Indeed, as as you say, if the World had been Eternal, the Memory of its Eternity might have been buried in such an endless Series of Revolutions and Successions; but what does this prove? Only what might have happen'd, not what really is to come to pass.

What you say is true, *viz.* that if the World was always peopled, there could not possibly be any common Spring from whence the Tradition should first rise, and therefore no Tradition for the World's Eternity can be expected; this I say, tho' suppos'd true can avail you nothing against a positive Tradition that the World was made and had a Beginning.

Theom. And how do you make it out.

Euseb. As past Matters of Fact are made out, *viz.* by History: And in the first Place *Aristotle* quoted above, does acknowledge that the most ancient Writers

ters held the World was made, and that Tradition did confirm People in the Perswasion, that God made all things: The Sythians and Egyptians were of this Opinion, the Indians and Phœnicians concurr'd with them, to say nothing of the Græcians who look'd upon the contrary Opinion as Innovation, nay and a kind of Heresy or Blasphemy.

And if we take a turn into *America*, if we enter the Forests and Wildernesses of this vast Region, we shall find the Peruvians and other Barbarians of this Sentiment; indeed some had very extravagant Notions of the Creation, but what can be expected from Men half turn'd Beasts, but Extravagance; yet they concurr'd with us in this, that God fram'd and model'd the World.

Secondly, The first Historian, and as Authentick as ever writ, gives a long account of the World's Beginning in *Genesis*. I do not intend to put this Book upon you as divinely Inspir'd, give it but the Credit of a *History*; this I only ask, and this you cannot refuse with justice, seeing he has been esteem'd by the *Jews* and *Christians*, not only as a
Di-

Divine Historian, and Legislator, but also as a *Prophet*.

Now supposing the World was Created, 'tis natural to think the first Man would leave his Children, and those to their Posterity a Tradition of so remarkable a Transaction; nor could this conveyance be hard, especially when in the World's Nonage, three Men alone *Mathusalem, Shem, and Isaac* could carry on a Tradition from the World's Creation almost to the *Israelites* descent into *Egypt*.

Again, supposing such a Tradition; it might be expected the first Writers should put it on Record: Now, this has happened; *Moses* the first Historiographer has descended to particulars; and as his Narration is reasonable, so withall it carries a certain Simplicity that perswades. *Berosus, Orpheus, Homer and Trismegistus* follow'd *Moses* in Age, as also in the Delivery of the World's Beginning: What they receiv'd from their Predecessors, they handed down to their Successors, and by this means the Opinion that the World had a Beginning carries all before it: The whole Body of Christians believe it, the *Mahomitans* and *Jews*, tho' they vary from us in other Points,

Points, agree with us in this ; and all Nations whoever acknowledg'd a God, own he was the Contriver of this great Master Piece of Power and Wisdom.

Now to go again to the Tide of Tradition, so Ancient, so Universal, and withall so Rational, upon no other Ground but meer Conjectures, or bare Possibilities, is Rashness to excess, and the very height of Folly ; 'tis to prefer the Reason of one Man before that of all Mankind, to brand his whole Species with the Infamy of a fond Credulity, and to pass Judgment upon 'em, that they are thoroughly quallify'd for *Bedlam*.

But again, if so full a Report will not satisfy you, you must pen up your Knowledge in a narrow Part of the World, you must forswear not only all Acquaintance with past Actions, but even with remote ; and what is worse, you must fall below that Station a Creature endued with Reason ought to keep : For when Reason gives me as great a Satisfaction about the Being, or not Being of a Fact, as Reason requires. 'Tis Imprudence to doubt : And a Man must take Pleasure to fret and disoblige his Understanding, that will not acquiesce

quiesce to such an Evidence. Now our present Controversy is a past Matter of Fact : We have put it upon Witnesses : Antiquity stands for me ; and all Nations agree in the Main, though they vary in some Circumstances. To these concurrent Testimonies you oppose naked Surmises , or pure Possibilities ; or else you *sub-pœna* a Brace or two of Atheists, or a Pack of *African* and *American* Bruits, who are scarce able to understand the very State of the Question, and know as little of past Transactions, as of those that are to come. I now appeal to your own Judgment, whether a full Tradition be not as good a Conviction, that the World had a Beginning, as the Nature of a Thing past requires ? And whether your Counter-Witnesses, who depose on Conjecture, would byass an upright Judge in any Court of Judicature, against a Cloud of others Superior both in Wisdom, and Probity.

Besides, I add another Circumstance very Material, and which deserves a little Reflection. If the World had been made in Time, by the Power and Wisdom of God, we could not expect a more full Tradition of its Beginning,

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than

than we have : Therefore on this very Account we have all the Reason to presume it had a Beginning. I prove it thus ; First it cannot be imagin'd, but some would stand up against it. Men's Judgments are as various as their Faces, and their Understandings seem no less bizar than their Humours. Some deny Things because every one believes 'em. They love Singularity in Opinions, as well as in Modes, and will no more endure a Rival in thinking, than in their Amours. Others are of a martial Complexion, they love to send their Brain upon Expeditions, and are temerarious enough to attack Demonstration. They follow Truth, as Constables do Malefactors, to arrest it, and rail against it, as the young *Athenian* did against *Alciades*, because every one applauded him ; they idolize Wit, but are ignorant of its Definition, and so, like Dray-Men, place it in clashing and contradicting. Others steer their Judgments by the Compass of Interest : One would think their Understandings had truck'd Natures with the Will, and that it had remov'd its Lodgings from the Head, to the Heart. Whatever flatters these Mens Vanity, or pampers their Inclinations,

nations, is always true; but if it frowns upon their Passions, or checks their Liberty, it must be false. Hence it comes that those Truths that even flash Conviction, and captivate Reason, the very Moment they are understood, oftentimes find Opposition, and are stigmatiz'd with Fallacy, because too clear to be prov'd. One would think *that the Part is less than the whole* is pretty plain, and that a Man must have a slender Portion of Wit, not to conceive it; yet a late Mathematician call'd it in Question, degraded it from the Quality of a Principle, and threw it amongst the Fry of vulgar Errors. Tis impossible to frame a Proposition more clear than this, *It is impossible the same should both be, and not be at the same Time.* Yet if we believe *Aristotle*, some Philosophers deny it: And that no Folly might want a Patron, as I have said already, *Zeno* would not admit Motion. Now if Men disbelieve first Principles, if they reject Truth when it appears in *dishabille*, and over look it, when it stands before them; what Wonder they don't see it at a Distance, when it appears by Proxy, and is conveyed only to us by Tradition? If we

will not credit our own Eyes; we may very well slight Authority, for certainly they are able to give a more exact Account of Things, than Tradition: They discover Truth in Person; we receive not their Intelligence at second Hand, but see Objects in their proper Colours, without Mask or Varnish. Tho' therefore the World was made; we could not expect (without a Miracle) a more universal Tradition, than we have of its Beginning.

Secondly, Nor ought the fabulous Opinions about the Creation prejudice the Truth of the Fact; for supposing it true, those would have sprung necessarily from the gross Ignorance of Barbarians; when a Story has past thro' two or three Hands, how unlike is it to the Original? Every one shapes it to his own Inclination: Some Circumstances are lost, others added; And nothing remains, but the Essential: If Truth be thus disguised in a Day; we must not wonder it suffers Alteration in the Space of six Thousand Years, especially among those Nations, who are ignorant of Letters, who are bred in Ignorance, and live in Brutality, who know no more of Time past, than of foreign Countries, and take

take as little Pains to cultivate their Understanding, as their Soil.

Theom. But by your Leave I could single you out some Traditions of a very ancient Date, and of far less Consequence, than the World's Creation, that pass currant without Opposition; for Example, who ever denyed there were such Men as *Alexander* or *Cesar*? Now if the World had a Beginning, why should not the Memory of so wonderful a Fact remain as Universal as that of *Cesar* or *Alexander*?

Euseb. First, If we went to polling, I believe those who stand for the World's Creation, would carry it, for this is acknowledged by a hundred Nations that never heard of those two Princes.

Secondly, If none have endeavoured to out-face the World, that there never were such Men, 'tis because the Contest was too insignificant; and besides, which Way should a Man set upon the Enterprize? he could expect no Relief from Reason. For alas! All the Reason in the World, can never shew, they were, or were not: He could therefore only have Recourse to Tradition, and where could he find any Pretence, to set on foot, so much as an *inuendo* they never

were? Unless he could hit upon an expedient to seize all the Records, that mention those Emperours, and then condemn them to the Fire: But it was the Interest of all Atheists to deny the World ever had a Beginning. Nay, 'twas absolutely impossible for them to admit Creation, and reject a Creator; and then that Principle *ex nihilo nihil fit*, was a great Support, not only to Atheists, but Philosophers; and no doubt, if that Principle be true the Matter at least may be eternal. Here you see that Interest might move some; and apparent Reason others, to stand for the World's Eternity, but neither could invite a Man to question either *Alexander* or *Cæsar*.

To sum up therefore the Force of my Argument in short: I say, our Controversy must be tryed either by Testimony or Reason, the first is the proper Court for pronouncing upon ancient Facts, and the most uncorrupt Tribunal. I have prov'd that the Torrent of Tradition runs for me, that the most ancient Writers, as well as the most recent; the most learn'd, as well as the most pious; the most polish'd Nations with the most incult, Witness for me.

Where,

Whereas none but a Pack of Atheists, or some wild Barbarians, or at most a Brace of whymfical Philosophers, famous for nothing but Singularity, dare appear in your Defence. If such an Evidence be not sufficient to prove a Fact, pray tell me what is? If you require more; I must conclude you are unreasonable; because you call for a greater Conviction, than the Subject will bear, or can be expected without a Miracle; and I suppose Miracles would as little befriend your Cause as Tradition.

D I A L O G U E XVII.

The Atheist supposing the World's Eternity, supposes an infinite Series of Generations possible, now it being ten times more Probable, that such a Series is Impossible; he must be guilty of the highest Imprudence to venture his Soul upon such an Uncertainty.

THE World (you say) was Possible *ab aeterno a se*: Therefore it was *ab aeterno a se*. I affirm it was not Possible *ab aeterno a se*: Therefore it was not *ab aeterno a se*. Our Positions are contradictory; and so are our Proofs: For you barely assert and prove Nothing: And I will prove by Reason what I assert.

Theom. Before you proceed, let me desire you not to meddle with *Infini-tum*. Tho' you raise a hundred Batteries against infinite Successions, you'll only go off with Labour and Disappointment. Your Philosophers have undertaken my Defence on that Side: And

I know not how you'll storm their Reasons, or level their Authority. Yet till this be done there's no coming at me. Therefore I counsel you not to raise your Battery on that Side.

Euseb. I confess the Pride 'of some Philosophers, and the litigious Humours of others, have been kind to Atheists: For in Reallity, Philosophy is no more a Science, but an Art of Jugling. Philosophers quest more after new Opinions, than Truth: And he is the Man; (not that searches into the Bowels of Nature) but that dresses and tricks up Notions in the best Posture of Defence against Opposers; and if he can handsomely embroil a Question; or dares offer Words for a solid Answer; or impeach Truth of Sophistry: He deserves to be pointed at: *Digitò monstrari & dicier hic est.* Thus some have asserted the Possibility of an Infinity *actu*, in spite of receiv'd Principles that oppose it. They shroud the Weakness of their Reasons under the Obscurity of the *Thesis*; and solve Difficulties by starting greater. You lay hold on their Vanity to support your *Hypothesis*: And think you have made it clear beyond Debate, by telling us Philosophers hold

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the Eternity of the World Possible: But under Favour, tho' their Authority may stave off some Arguments from you, it cannot others: For tho' they hold God could create the World *ab aeterno*: They deny it could be *a. se.* If therefore in one Case you defer something to their Authority, be so just, as to reverence it in the other: Besides, you vast Pretenders to Wit, will not be sob'd off with Authority. This is the Refuge of Weakness; The Sanctuary of those, whose good Humour must compound for the Shallowness of their Brain. You are for Reason; for naked Demonstration, without Fard, or *fucus*: For Evidence, that admits of no Reply, no Rejoinder; therefore stand to your Principles before you strike in with these mighty Upholders of *Infinitem*. Bring their Reasons to the Touchstone: Examen whether they are sterling, or adulterate. I will only propose one or two Difficulties, which I confess put me to the Plunge. The World you say is Eternal?

Theom. I do.

Euseb. Therefore it was Impossible for you ever to have been Born.

Theom.

Theom. I deny the Inference.

Euseb. I prove it. You could not possibly be Born till an infinite Number of Generations was past : But 'tis Impossible for an infinite Number of Generations to pass, therefore 'twas Impossible for you ever to have been Born.

Theom. 'Tis Impossible for an infinite Number of Generations to pass, in an infinite Space of Time ; I deny your *Minor* : In a finite Space of Time, I grant your *Minor*, and deny the Consequence.

Euseb. I subsume, but 'tis Impossible for an infinite Space of Time ever to pass : For if it can pass, it has an End, and by consequence we find an Infinite with an End ; and certainly this Consequence becomes not a Man, who avoids the Belief of a Deity, because Infinity is an inconceivable Thing. I know not how you look upon my Argument : But methinks any Man but an Atheist would start at it.

Again, if by Descent we may pass by an infinite Series of Generations ; why not by Ascent ? Methinks 'tis no farther from the Bottom of a Pair of Stairs, to the Top ; than from the Top to the Bottom ? And I always thought
the

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The Way from *London* to *Windsor* was the same, with that from *Windsor* to *London*: Now in Ascending from you, to your Father from him, to your Grandfather, &c. we march in the same Road; we call in at the same Gentlemen. If therefore by Descent we come to an End of our Journey, why not by Ascend.

Theom. The Reason is evident: For by Ascending you come to an End of Generations; and stop at the first Man: Then the Succession of Generations has not been infinite.

Euseb. Right: But then it inevitably follows, there has not been an infinite Series of Generations: Because you put an End to 'em, they are at a full stop in your Person.

Theom. There is a great Disparity between the two Cases. Because when you mount up, from Son to Father, from Father to Grandfather, &c. the Time is always Finite. Now what Wonder that an Infinity of Generations can't be trac'd up to their Origin in a finite Space? But when you Descend to me, there has pass'd an infinite Space of Time: And so one Infinity corresponds to the other.

Euseb.

Euseb. No doubt, you have plain'd the Difficulty beyond Dispute by your quaint Disparity. But I wou'd know why a Man by Ascending cannot step from Time to Eternity, as well as by Descending from Eternity into Time? And then, how can an Infinite Time pass?

Theom. These Infinities and Eternities are puzzling Subjects, they out-stretch the Abilities of our Understandings, and your Argument presses those Philosophers who maintain God cou'd Create the World *ab aeterno*.

Euseb. Infinities and Eternities are puzzling Subjects indeed; but then I wonder an Atheist's Reason should stumble at the Notion of an infinite Being, and leap so nimbly over apparent Contradictions. I do not insist upon my Proof as a Demonstration that there is a first Principle, or that the World was not *a se*. Perchance in a puzzling Subject our Understanding may be Non-plus'd; but at least it demonstrates, that the whole Body of Atheists is unreasonably to Folly and Madness; for they reject God on Account of his Infinity; and some other Attributes that (they say) are inconceivable. In the mean
time

Time, they are constreign'd to admit an infinite and Eternal Series of Generations; a Thing that not only surpasses our Conception, but in Appearance falls foul on the most evident and receiv'd Maxims of Reason. If we must place Infinity and Eternity somewhere: I appeal to Reason, whether it be not more agreeable to its Dictates, to attribute those Perfections to a Being, in whose Notion they necessarily enter, and imply no other Difficulty, but what follows a finite Understanding, when it roaves in Infinity, and looses it self in Eternity; than to this World, which in its most essential Notion, involves no Idea of Eternity: Nay, it cannot be apply'd to it, without violating either directly or by Illation, the very Principles of Discourse. Whence I conclude some more unworthy Principle than Reason induces Atheists to question the Existence of a God, because his most inconceivable Attributes return to their own *Hypothesis* with more Violence.

These Philosopher's Case, who think God might have created the World *ab Aeterno*, is quite different from yours; tho' their Opinion be false, their Faith is true: So that at worst they risque
nothing

nothing but their Labour; but you put all your Hopes on a weak Bottom: If my Arguments be true, your Soul is lost; And you will deplore your successive Eternity *a parte ante*, which has an End, for a whole Eternity *a parte post*, which will have none. Lord! How would an Atheist crow! How would he chirp? If he could but avil out a Proof, so apparently conclusive for the Worl's Eternity, as mine is against it? We should see the Book-sellers Stalls in *Paul's Church-Yard* hung with new *Demonstrations against the Existence of a God*; as they were some Years ago with *Demonstrations against a Trinity*. We should see Copies in every *Coffee-House*, and the *Beaus* busy in conning it over to make themselves Masters of it: But because the Proof does not hit with their Inclination, it must not work upon their Understanding. It falls as heavy upon our Philosophers (you say) as upon you; what then? Can Company change the Nature of Things? If they are in the Wrong, are you in the Right? Wou'd you engage your Estate or Life that my Argument is meer *Paralogism*? I believe you would take some time for Consideration before you ventur'd

tur'd upon the Bet. Why then do you stake your Soul? For if an eternal Succession of Generations be impossible. The World was made in Time. If it was made, there is a God; and if there be one, what can an Atheist expect from a slighted Deity, but a just Chastisement for his Infidelity? The Consequence is of Importance, and deserves some serious Thoughts.

D I A L O G U E XVIII.

The third Proof. The Characters of Wisdom visible in the Frame and Constitution of the World demonstrate, it is the Work of a wise Agent.

I Have already prov'd a God by the bare Existence of the World: I confirm the same *Thesis* by the excellent Contrivance of it; which indeed is both amazing and ravishing: It can neither be expressed by Tongue, nor drawn out by Pencil. 'Tis above Art, and out of the Reach of Reason. The most searching *Genius* that ever was,
has

has not been able to discover one Blot in the large *Volume* of the World : There are no *Errata's*. Nothing slept in as a rude Essay of Skill, and afterwards under-went the File or Hammer, but all things continue as they were from the *Beginning of the Creation*.

From this Order and Regularity Tully infers, that the World was the Product of a wise *Agent* ; and brands those with Folly, who dare deny a Conclusion so clear, so evident : *Esse præstantem aliquam æternamque naturam, eamque suspiciendam adorandamque pulchritudo mundi ordoque rerum celestium cogit confiteri* : The Beauty of the World, and exact Order of the Heavens demonstrate the Existence of a noble and eternal Being, to whom Men owe Esteem and Adoration ; nay he sticks not to affirm, that the Contemplation of the Oeconomy, Harmony, and Order of the heavenly Bodies, put the Matter in a Light, that leaves no Room for Dispute. *Quid potest esse tam apertum tamque perspicuum, cum calum suspicimus celestiaque contemplati sumus, quam aliquod esse numen præstantissimæ mentis, quo hæc regantur ?* What can be imagin'd more clear, than that there is a most wise Being, who directs and governs the Heavens ?

Now

Now that a Vein of Wisdom runs thro' every Part of the World, is most evident ; for it supposes two Things, a Design ; and Means proportion'd to acquire it : And where those two are found, Wisdom must be admitted. We have Eyes to see, and there are Colours capable of being seen. We have Organs fitted up for *Smell, Taste, and Feeling* : and there are Objects able to gratify 'em. *Colours, smell, &c.* would be useless, were there no Senses to receive 'em ; and Senses insignificant, if there was nothing in Nature to play upon 'em. This reciprocal Relation argues a Design, and a Choice of Means ; and who denies it to be the Contrivance of Wisdom, is slenderly provided with this Vertue.

The Sun, which is call'd the Father of Nature, as the Earth is term'd the Mother, moves about us in so just a Distance, that nothing could place it so conveniently, but his Wisdom, who assign'd its Task. Were it more remote, the Earth would congeal ; did it approach, we should be parch'd with Heat, and fall into Ashes : But now we enjoy the Benefit of its Light ; and the Earth the Effects of its enlivening Influence ; it impregnats the Womb of
Nature

Nature with its Rayes; and attacks Vapours to pour 'em down in Dews and Showres, that refresh the Fields, enliven Flowers, and bring with 'em Plenty and Aabundance; and at the same Time returns those Waters to the Rivers and Sea, of whom it borrow'd 'em; and so (as it were) exercises at once, an Act of Liberality and Justice.

But then all those delicious Fruits that charm the Eye, and please the Palate, would rather be admirable than useful, did they not turn into the Substance of Animals; and those (like *Tantalus*) would perish of Hunger in the Arms of Plenty, had they no Instinct to feed on 'em. But again, had every Creature an Inclination to the same Food, one would starve the other; Nature would be at a *Nonplus* for Provision, her Granaries would be exhausted, her Stock drain'd, and then Mortality would follow: But now she keeps open Table for all her Children, she maintains 'em at her own Expences: And tho' they neither Reap nor Sow, they are rather overwhelm'd with Plenty, than press'd with Necessity: Besides, had not the *Male* an Inclination for the *Female*, the Species would be at an End: And this
Incli-

Inclination would not continue 'em, unless Propagation were made by it. Had the Female no Tenderneſs for her Young, they could not hold out a Day; yet did not her Teats ſwell with Milk, her Tenderneſs could not preſerve 'em; but theſe poor Creatures forſaken by their Dam would be expoſ'd to Inſult were they deſtitute of Swiftneſs, Craft, Courage, or Arms to defend themſelves, or annoy the Aggreſſors. Nature has provided againſt this Inconvenience: Flight ſaves ſome, Wiles others, and many Diſpute their Lives; and when they are over-power'd, they ſeldom fall without Revenge. They handle their Weapons with Art, and fence by Rule and Method. The *Porcupines* like the *Parthians* fight at a Diſtance; they ſhoot without Bows, or *Arquebuſe*; and hit the Mark without aim. The *Hedge-Hog* at the Approach of Danger marſhals it ſelf into a Sphere; it caſts up a Retrenchment; expects the Enemy behind a *Palliſade*, and ſupplies with Policy, the Weakneſs of its Forces. The Bull faces his Adverſary. The Horſe wheels off, and uſes his Heels, either to fly, or to wound. If you intended to continue Creatures, could you invent
more

more fit, more apt Means? Were you Commissary General, could you lay up better Provisions? Are you able to place their Weapons more advantageously for their Defence? Or teach 'em to manage them with greater Dexterity? There are more legible Characters of Wisdom and Foresight in the Republick of Beasts, than in those of *Lycurgus*, *Solon*, *Plato* and *Aristotle*; for these intended a perfect Common-Wealth, they err'd most shamefully in the Means, and enacted Laws more suitable to Goats than Men. But among irrational Creatures, as these Laws are inviolable, so they are proportioned to their Natures and Welfare. They neither err by Excess, nor Defect, one more Rule would subvert Oeconomy, as well as one less; nothing can be added nothing subtracted.

I shall not enter upon the Fabrick of their Bodies, where Wisdom sits on every Muscle. Let it suffice that *Galen* takes Notice in his Book *de Forma fatus*, that in human Bodies there are above 600 Muscles; and that every one requires at least ten Qualifications. So that about these small Parts alone, no less than 6000 Ends are to be attended to.

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There are 284 Bones, and each has above forty Ends, in all ten Thousand; and a Failure in any one of these would cause a great Irregularity in the Body, and in many Death and Destruction.

Now not to dilate further upon this Proof, I appeal to you, whether these strange and admirable Contrivances; these natural Tendencies to one Point; and with all these Means so proportionable, do not cry out, *ipse fecit nos, & non ipsi nos?* We are neither the Work of blind Chance; nor the Product of fatal Necessity, but of an infinite Power and Wisdom. We cannot cast an Eye upon a rough Landskip, but the very Sight of it leads us to a Painter: And if a Tree, or Animal in Effigies conducts us naturally to a Hand, that drew them, and to Wisdom that contriv'd 'em; can these Living Originals be father'd on Hazard, or Necessity?

Theom. These Things you mention are worthy of Observation; they entertain sometimes my serious Thoughts, and cast me into Raptures of Admiration; but yet they do not exceed the Force and Energy of Nature.

Euseb.

Euseb. What do you mean by Nature? Is it an intelligent Being? or void of all Sensation and Reason? If intelligent, you misuse Words to confound Notions, you represent God travestied into Nature; if it be deprived of all Knowledge, then you run to Matter and Motion: Now these two are incapable of Wisdom; they can neither think nor understand, they are without Reason, and even without Sense. Notwithstanding the World is invested with plain Characters of Wisdom, they are stamp'd and engraven'd on each Part of the Universe: The Learned and the Ignorant, the Vulgar and the Philosophers are Unanimous in this Point: What then remains, but that we draw this necessary Inference, that some wise Intelligent Eternal Being did raise out of nothing this lovely Fabrick, that he plac'd every Creature in its proper Station, prefix'd its End, Provided it with Instruments to compleat the Work Providence has assign'd it.

Theom. You know our Understandings are very short-sighted, they discover nothing plainly but our Ignorance, where-ever we look we find our selves encompass'd with Difficulties, the most trifling

trifling, the most common Objects perplex our Reason, we cannot fix a right Notion of Production, if we could, perchance the Mystery would vanish without any Recourse to a first Cause. Your little Tricks of *Pass* surprise the ignorant, who often ascribe to Magick those Operations, that have no other Cause than slight of Hand. In fine, as Mr. *Hobbs* takes Notice, the Multitude desires what it cannot comprehend. Ignorance begets Admiration, Admiration Respect, Respect Fear, and Fear Religion.

Euseb. I am glad to see you so low in your own Eyes this Morning, and that your peremptory and dogmatical Humour is spent; surely you have lately made a more intimate Acquaintance with human Nature; and a fuller Discovery of the Imperfections of our Intellect, has read you a Lesson of Humility. Indeed our Understandings are poor and unfurnish'd, they come into the World unshap'd, and must be polish'd by Study, before they can give a tollerable Account of the most obvious Trifles; and yet when this is done, we cannot rely on their Intelligence, for they have but few Principles to steer by; the Gross of our Knowledge

is made of Illations; which are beaten out with great Labour and Attention; and when we contemplate self-evident Truth at a Distance. The Mind is puzzled at the View of some emerging Circumstances: Which makes us forget, or mistake the Connexion of the Consequence with the Premises; and then our Labour is rewarded with Error.

I willingly therefore grant, that I cannot dive into abstruse Secrets of Nature. I neither know the Mystery of Generation, nor that of Corruption. I believe I am a Compound of two very different Ingredients, Spirit, and Matter: But how such disproportion'd Things keep so strict a Correspondence, I am as ignorant as the Child unborn. Perchance a Philosopher may harangue, and talk more plausibly upon the Matter, than an Oyfter-woman: But after all; if we bring his eleborated Discourse to the Test: We shall find nothing but *Cant*, Terms, and scholastical Jargon: But what then? Cannot I judge that *Paul's-Church* never made it self; before I have conn'd over *Vitriovius*? Or must I know all the Rules of *Limning*, to be sure the Signs in *London* are the Work of a Painter? Tho' I cannot conceive

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which

which way the *Thames* was turn'd, when the Bridge was built, or when the Arches are form'd of Marble, or Free-Stone; yet I am pretty well convinc'd by the Uniformity and Contrivance of the Fabrick, that Wisdom, and Art had a Hand in the Building. And I would laugh at those who should maintain, that either *Fate*, *Chance*, or *Nature* plac'd the Stones in that regular Form: A thousand Things in the Universe seem to me meer Riddles. Yet I behold a Stately Machine made up of ten Millions of Peices: I see beauty Symmetry, and Design; this suffices to perswade a rational Creature nothing but Wisdom contriv'd it; and nothing but Power put the *Idea* in Execution. So that I infer from what I know, that an infinite Wisdom fram'd, and governs the World: Not from what I do not know.

Theom. You must not argue from Works of Art to those of Nature. We see Bridges, Churches, and Pictures made by the Hands of Artificers, and therefore we rationally conclude, that even these that are of an older Standing own their Origin to Art. But who saw

saw the first Stone laid in the Foundation of the World?

Euseb. You turn your Battery the wrong Way; and level at your own Hypothesis: As directly as I could wish: Because we see Pictures under the Hand of the Painter, and edifices under those of Masons and Carpenters; we have reason to infer, that all such Things are the Effects of an intelligent *Agent*; but if such Trifles require an understanding Artificer, I would know, why the Fabrick of the World, compacted of so many Parts, so curiously Wrought, so artificially Knit together, should not lead us to the same Conclusion? Have I Right to ascribe the Raising of a wretched Cabane to Wisdom, and not the whole Frame of the Universe? Must I confess the pretty Proportion of a Leath of Wheels in a Watch is owing to the Skill of a Workman? And that the stupendious Frame of my Body is the pure Object of blind Chance? Or fatal Necessity? Certainly such palpable Absurdities would persuade one, that Sense and Reason were not made for Mankind; and that we force Nature when we pretend to it.

D I A L O G U E XIX.

The Fourth Proof. The Invention of Arts and Sciences show the World is not Eternal: And consequently that it was made by a powerful Agent.

Euseb. **W**E see new Arts start up with new Ages. The World is now better provided, not only with Fences against Necessity; but even with Supports of Grandure, than it was two thousand Years ago. The Discovery of the Card is but of late standing, tho' of great Importance. The Inventions of Powder, and of the Press are not much more ancient. *Rerum Natura sacra non simul tradit.* Arts follow the Law of Nature, they are brought forth by Degrees, and are polish'd by Time and Experience.

Other Arts, as they are more necessary to Mankind, so they are more ancient; yet we can track them up to their Origin. We know the Inventors of Husbandry and Tillage; who Traffick on Foot, and first brav'd the Ocean
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in Ships. Now if the World was eternal, the Industry and Study of Man were eternal also. How then is it credible, that Men of the same Temper with us, sagacious, witty and ambitious, should faunter away a whole Eternity, without making those Discoveries, we owe wholly to the last six thousand Years? Was the World always a Child? Always in its Non-Age? Has it only arriv'd at the Years of Discretion since some few Ages?

Again the Desire to perpetuate their Memories runs in the Blood of all Men. We hate to bury our Names in the Grave with our Bodies, to sleep in Dust and Ashes, as unknown to Posterity, as we are to our Predecessors: Nay some have been so besotted with the Charms of Life at second Hand, that because they wanted Vertues, they presented Posterity with their Vices, and chose rather to be blam'd; than forgotten. I suppose our Fore-Fathers conveyed down to us their Inclinations, together with their Nature; and that none of their Passions chang'd in the Voyage, or were improv'd by Transplantation; their Propensions lean'd the same Way, they were as high metled, as greedy of vain

Applause as we: It cannot therefore be questioned, but that Men, so fond of Glory endeavoured to glut their Appetite, some at the Peril of their Lives, and others of their Quiet. It cannot be thought they either wanted Matter or Occasion: Ambition never sleeps, it stands upon the Catch, and either finds a Subject for Action or makes one. The Power of a Neighbour, or the Weakness, are both strong Temptations to an ambitious Prince; *That* promises Glory, *This* Conquest; and either draws on a War. Pray tell me therefore, who were those ancient Heroes? Where did they reign? What Province did they waste, or subdue? Who rais'd the first Empire? Who built the second on the Ruins of the first? Was not a whole Eternity able to produce one *Homer*? One *Curtius*? One *Livy*? Did it never come into any King's Head to bribe a Pen, or to buy a Panegyrick? Were all the Wits of the World so Stubborn, as neither to be mov'd by Interest, nor Applause, to write a News Letter, or Gazette? Indeed I do not wonder we have no exact Diary of past Transactions; for to digest an eternal Story into Days, is a laborious Task: and re-
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quires a Purse to buy Materials, as well as a vast Stock of Patience to Employ them. But still methinks we might reasonably expect some Fragments, or at least the Name of one Prince. But alas! All those *Worthies* lie enterr'd under the Ruins of Time, their brave Exploits sleep with their Persons, and their very Empires are drown'd in silence and oblivion. By the Help of prophane Records we cannot trace Time above the *Theban War*, as *Lucretius* confesses; and therefore *Macrobius* concludes the World could not be Eternal. *Quis dubitet quin mundus recens & novus sit, cum Historia Græca bis mille annorum historiam vix contineat?* Who doubts but the World is of a Short standing, seeing the *Grecian Story* gives an Account only of two Thousand Years? Perchance you will say, Writing is but of late Invention; and that all the memorable Actions of Antiquity perish'd for want of this happy Means, of conveying them to Posterity: Where are at least the Painters? And Carvers? A Picture, Statue, or Medal would have given some Satisfaction; or had they rais'd one *Pyramid*, we might at least have an Assurance all Mankind was not

Drunk with *Opium*; and stupify'd with an eternal Lethargy: But after all, 'tis strange, that so busy, so sharp a Creature as Man, during an infinite Succession of Ages, should not stumble upon the Way of Writing, a Thing so necessary to the Support of Society; and withall so obvious: That Man was certainly fortunate indeed, who hit upon an Art in some Years, that had escap'd the Search of all Mankind for the Space of a whole Eternity.

Theom. The Answer to your Proof is very easie *tempus edex rerum* sung the Poet: Time like *Saturn* devours its Children: It consumes its own Productions, and preys upon its Off-spring. Now if Time be such a Cormorant; Eternity must be a Greater. Time like Distance diminishes Things; but Eternity swallows 'em up, and removes 'em beyond the Sphere of Memory. How many brave Actions within these thousand Years have slipt by the Pens of the most inquisitive Historians? They are wore out of Memory, together with the *Heroes*, that achiev'd 'em, and lie Entomb'd in oblivion and forgetfulness: Nay Cities, not only decay, but vanish. What remains of that famous *Babylon*, but the Name?

Name? We know not what it was; and are ignorant even where it stood. And *Florus* confesses, that in his time, not only *Samnium* was lost; but also its very Ruins. If some few Ages eat out the Memory of noble Exploits; and convey out of sight Cities, together with the Earth they stood on; why do you call for an exact Register of Arts? An eternal Genealogy of Princes? Or an Account of their Actions? They are lost in an infinite Succession of Ages. They are drown'd in the Ocean of Eternity.

Euseb. By what Misfortune?

Theom. By Deluges and Conflagrations.

Euseb. Pray Sir let me ask you, to what Office of Intelligence you address your self for those Deluges, Conflagrations, and Wars? Upon what Memorials do you ground the Story of your *Præadamitical* Transactions? To say there were such Things is not to prove it. And what you Assert without good Caution, may be deny'd with Reason.

Theom. Under favour; methinks my Answer is very much to the Purpose. It attacks, not, your Proof in the Rear,

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but in the Front; and strikes at the very Heart of it. You show the World was not Eternal; because it is invested with all the Characters of Novelty. Industry (you say) either improves old Arts, or invents new ones. Some are younger than we: Others than our Fathers: And the most Ancient have their Origin. Their Inventors are Recorded in Story; and come within the Memory of Books. Whence you conclude, the World was not Eternal; because those Arts must of necessity have been of a more stale Invention. For how can a Man imagine that those Things should lie out of Sight for a whole Eternity? Which have been discover'd in a few Ages? To which I answer; that all this may be very well reconcil'd with the World's Eternity; for they might have been found out an Infinity of Times; and as often lost by accidental Deluges, and Conflagrations. Now; if by such unforeseen and irremediable *Chances*, Arts and Sciences might fall into Oblivion; your Argument falls to the Ground, it cannot subsist; and it is of no force to prove the *Non-Eternity* of the World.

Euseb.

Euseb. My Argument is as well timbered as ever, and your weak Reason makes me more in Love with it: For supposing such Accidents might happen, *i. e.* were possible. By what new coin'd Logick, can you infer they did? Many Things may be, that never will be, and he that governs himself by Possibilities, may fear all Things; and hope for any Thing. Nay your Possibilities (as I shew'd before) like a Two edged Sword cut both Ways, they stand for each Side of the Contradiction, and whilst they take both Parts, advantage neither. For as you say 'twas possible for such Accidents to happen: and therefore conclude they did: So affirm 'twas possible not to happen, therefore infer they did not. My Argument is certainly stronger than yours, for we find by Experience, that fewer Things happen that are possible, than do not.

But to close with your Argument, I ask whether those Deluges were particular or Universal? A particular Inundation, will not do your Business. For supposing the Sea should break its Inclosure, and play such Pranks in our Island, as it did in *Attica*. Would the surviving Part of the World replunge
into

into Barbarity and Ignorance? Would the Arts of Writing and Printing disappear in *France, Spain and Italy*, because, *England* lay under Water? No, no Sir! The World would jog on, Arts would flourish, just as they do. Perchance the great Sciences of making *Pudding* and *Brawn* which (as *Mr. John Ray* takes Notice in his *Observations*, are *Dishes proper to England*) might suffer by the Misfortune, yet Industry might retrieve them, for without Doubt the Receipts were slip'd into *Flanders* with our Armies; and as the Dutch taught us to besiege Towns, so certainly we instructed them in the deep Mysteries of *Pudding* and *Brawn*.

It follows therefore that those Deluges were Universal (but not supernatural I hope) for then you grant the very Thing we contend for, *viz.* a God. Nor could they be Natural; because according to the present Situation of Things, an universal Deluge caus'd by the Force of Nature is utterly impossible; and I could easily demonstrate it, did the Stress of our present Debate depend upon *Hydrostaticks*: But if I grant such a Deluge naturally Possible; yet as to the Probability you are never the Nigher;

Nigher ; for how can any Man in his Senses perswade himself, that a Thing is probable, or likely to happen ; that has never fall'n out in an infinite Duration ? He that can believe that to be probable, that has never come to pass in an eternal Revolution of Ages, must not be an Enemy to Credulity.

Theo. I never said yet that an universal Inundation was Probable, you have foisted in that Word for your own Advantage.

Euseb. Have you not told me, those Deluges have come so very near the Matter, that few escap'd ? That they have brought Mankind a Thousand times within an Ace of its Ruin ? The Waters then did cover all the Surface of the Earth ; except a small Spot of Ground able to give footing to half a Hundred. Why could they not Swell six Foot higher ? Who Commanded this furious Element to halt in that *critical* Point ? If it could rise so high, by the Help of natural Causes ? Why not some Foot higher ? And if it could ? Why did it not in an Eternity ? Methinks there should be Spring-Deluges, as well as Spring-Tides : And in such a Tract of Time it might once at least
mount

mount to the highest Pitch. Infine, Sir, I desire you, and the whole Sect of Atheistical Philosophers to produce one Reason that carries the least Shadow of Probability to prove the Waters naturally could swell to the Tops of the highest Mountains; and not cover them if they could, within the Compass of an Eternity; they had done it: for it seems incredible, that Nature should not do in an infinite Space, whatever lay within the Reach of its Power.

But again it seems strange, that all the ingenious Part of Mankind should be invalid in this common Shipwrack; and a small Parcel of illiterate, ignorant, unprofitable Blockheads survive the Fall of Nature: For if a Hundred only escap'd, 'tis very likely some Mechanicks, some Carpenter, some Plowmen, one at least that could Write and Read; and probably one Taylor might be in this fortunate Company. If so? They might propagate their Arts with their Blood, and repeople the World in a short Time with Trades, as well as with Inhabitants. Now Things have happen'd quite contrary; the World tho' stock'd with People, was many Years destitute of Arts. They knew neither the Way
of

of Ploughing, nor Sowing: They could neither plant Vines, nor press Wine, nor turn Milk into Curds, nor those into Cheese. Men liv'd on the meer Bounty of Nature, Water satisfy'd their Thirst: And Fruit their Hunger: And for want of the *Post-Office* every one did his own Message. Nay they had not the Wit to cover their Nakedness; so that God himself according to Tradition, cut out the first Cloaths, and from this Moment we may Date the Company of *Merchant-Taylors*.

I come to your Conflagrations which can only concern Books: For they cannot consume Arts, unless first they prey upon Men: And methinks the Fire must have nickt the Time, *that is*, set upon all the Houses in the World together; When all Mankind was bury'd in a profound Sleep to do the Feat compleat. Now (I fancy) tho' Flames should stand upon the Watch for an Eternity; they would never meet with so fair an occasion to dispatch our Species: But at last they have ravang'd Libraries, (you say) and glutted their Rage with *Memorials* and *Records*; they not only turn'd Authors themselves into Ashes; but all the *Historical Dictionaries*,
of

together with the *Journaux des Scavens* ; So that their very Names were consum'd with the Paper that preserv'd 'em ; and mingled with the Dust we tread on. Your System is too ridiculous to be examin'd ; too foolish to be confuted ; Reason has an Antipathy against such Absurdities ; they are unable even to work on a Madman. There is no question but Fire may master Libraries, as well as private Houses ; and treat 'em with as little Regard as *White-Hall* ; but this will not do your Jobb ; to slave *Phanomenaes*, we must suppose either that all the Books in the World were wheeled into one Magazine before the Mine sprung ; or that Fire-Balls were cast into all the Libraries at a Signal ; these two Ways might do a great deal of Execution, and dispatch some *Tun* of Divinity and History in a short time ; and I conceive they are Possible, but to suspect 'em Probable, is to impose on our Reason ; the very Thought of such a Thing is a Scandal to human Nature ; but to believe it, Frenzy and Madness.

D I A L O G U E XX.

The fifth Proof. 'Tis shewn quasi a priore the World was not Eternal a se.

Euseb. **I** Confess its more easie to deny, than to prove; the Assailant always attacks at a Disadvantage; that is not above the Performance of Ignorance, or Folly: But this requires both Wit and Study. However, I waive your Advantage, and will draw a Reason or two from the very Nature and Constitution of the World, which I think comes near Conviction, and makes it highly credible, it could not possibly be *ab aeterna a se.*

If it were Eternal; it is a *Necessary* and *Independent* Being; if *Necessary* and *Independent*, it must be *Eternal a parte post*. For as it depends of Nothing, but it self for its Being, it can depend of Nothing distant from its self for its Conservation; and as its own Nature was sufficient to give it *Existence*, so it is sufficient to continue it; therefore if its *Existence* was *necessary*, its Continuation

378 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*

ation is necessary, and if this be necessary, it must be *Eternal*; hence it follows, that if the *Whole* was *Eternal*, its *Parts* must be *Eternal*; for the *World* is not distinct from all its *Parts*: Therefore, if the *World* was *Eternal*, all its *Parts* were *Eternal* also *a parte ante*, and will be so *a parte post*: But no Part of the *World* is *Eternal*; therefore the *Whole* is not *Eternal*. Let us single out one *Species*: 'Tis evident Men are Born, and Die; therefore 'tis evident that Men were not *a parte ante* *Eternal*.

Theom. I wonder you will impose upon the Company: This is not to reason, but to trifle; and the Proof has more Raillery than Reason. I know I was Nothing sixty Years ago, and that within some time I shall return to my everlasting Home. I am not of my self, but the Work of Nature, and must march off when She commands me, nor was there ever any *Eternal* Individual.

Euseb. A little clearer if you please: When you say Man was *Eternal*, what do you mean?

Theom. I mean the *Species*.

Euseb.

Euseb. I understand. Are you then turn'd Platonick, and separate the Species from the Individuals?

Theom. No.

Euseb. Why then; methinks it follows, if no Individual was *a se*, the Species was not *a se*, because the Species is indistinct from *all* the Individuals.

Theom. You call in again at *Infinitem*, and forget it has no *all*. *All* is a Chymera, a kind of Philosophical Bull, not apply'd to a determinate Number.

Euseb. Indeed *Infinitem* has an excellent Situation, like Cities in Bogs, there is no coming at it; but at present it lies out of my way, and I shall draw off without meddling with it. But I must tell you I take a Riddle for a Solution. At least human Species is Eternal *a se*.

Theom. I have granted it.

Euseb. Why then it can never be extinct: For what depends of it self must be Eternal, and whatever is Eternal *a se a parte ante*, must be so *a parte post*; unless perchance the Fancy should take a Thing to destroy its self, which is unlikely, and impossible to our Hypothesis. For whatsoever exists *a se*, exists necessarily; but what exists necessarily *a se*,

se, must always exist, otherwise it will be *necessary*, and *not necessary*, which implies a flat Contradiction.

Theom. Well ; supposing this true ; what do you infer ?

Euseb. That our Species is a Stranger to Eternity, as well as its Individuals, and no more a *se* than you, or I : For all those Men who are now in Being, must once knock off, and submit to the common Fate of Mortality.

Theom. They must, this is a terrible Truth, but past Debate ; methinks I would purchase one Dose of *Esculapius's* Immortal *Possset Drink*, at any rate.

Euseb. If they dy'd without Issue, our Species would be at an end.

Theom. Most true ; if they made a Vow of Continence, and kept it, our Race would be short-liv'd : But I have no great Apprehension, that all Mankind will engage in an *Association* to stand by Chastity with their Lives and Fortunes, or to dye Batchelours.

Euseb. It's not very likely indeed, so long as their is an Atheist in the World, the Work of Propagation will go on : At least such a Resolution is not impossible for you, and I can make it, and there is the same Reason for every Man

in the World: 'Tis therefore possible for the whole Species to perish.

Theom. What then?

Euseb. Why then it follows by an evident Illation, that our Species is not *a se*: For whatever is *a se*, must of necessity be Eternal *a parte post*, as it is Eternal *a parte ante*. The same Argument takes in any Species now Existent; whence I conclude that if no Species be Eternal, no Part of the World is Eternal, nor by consequence the Whole.

Theom. Not so fast if you please: You prove too much: And by consequence Nothing.

Euseb. How so.

Theom. Could not God (if there be such a Thing) have Created the World *ab aeterno*.

Euseb. My Reason tells me he could not: But not to engage in a Matter foreign to our Dispute, I grant he could.

Theom. Let us then suppose he did Create it *ab aeterno*; in this Case our Species would be Eternal *a parte ante*.

Euseb. It would.

Theom.

Theom. Therefore by your Way of Demonstrating, it would be *Eternal a parte post*; because according to your new Logick, what ever is *Eternal* one way; must be *Eternal* the other: But I conceive the whole *Species* might be stilled by your general Association, even in this *Hypothesis*, as well as in the other, therefore it evidently follows, that the *Species* of Mankind would be *Eternal*, and not *Eternal*.

Euseb. Sir, you mistake the Force of my Argument. I do not say whatever is *Eternal a parte ante*, must be so *a parte post*: But whatever is *Eternal a parte ante a se* must be *Eternal a parte post*. I gave you the Reason just now, viz. because whatever Exists *a se* is independent, and intrinsically Necessary, and therefore it's incapable of Destruction; but whatever is Created, depends of its Cause, to whose Power alone it owes its Being; and by consequence is nothing intrinsically Necessary: It's therefore no more strange that Things, that are by courtesy, and Exist by benovelence Perish, then that Men walk off, and crumble into Dust and Ashes.

Theom.

Theom. But if we suppose with *Aristotle*, that God is a *necessary Agent*, two Things naturally follows: First, That our *Species* was *ab aeterno*; and Secondly; That it is *necessary*: Therefore it was necessary *ab aeterno*: For in this Case it could not but be *ab aeterno*; yet this being granted, the Difficulty returns upon you, for if you say, our *Species* (in this Supposition) must be *Eternal a parte post*, what can hinder me from making the same Reply: If you say, it may Perish, therefore 'tis true that our *Species* may end, tho' it be *Eternal a se independent and necessary*.

Euseb. You have cast the Cause upon a palpable Untruth, and beg the Protection of an Absurdity: Howsoever to combat your Opinion more successfully, we'll examin its most plausible Pretences, and see if we can discover the Weakness of them. I say then, this Retreat will not secure you: For till your *Species* remains *intrinsically Contingent*, and has no other *Necessity*, but that of its Cause; according to its own Nature it may exist or not exist: It has no Perfection inherent, that challenges before *non Existence*: So that if it be granted, that it did exist necessarily *ab aeterno*

aterno, this Necessity is meerly extrin^{se}
secal; its Nothing but an Imperfection
of the Cause, no Perfection of the Ef-
fect: Now in this Supposition our *Spe-*
cies might perish, because it has no in-
trin^{sick} Vertue that opposes its Destru-
ction, but if it exists *a se*, then Existence
is identified with its Nature, and it can
no more cease to be, than it could not
be: So that no *Hypothesis* can elude an
Argument; wherefore I conclude its evi-
dent our *Species* may be extinguish'd,
therefore its evident it cannot be Eter-
nal *a se*. But pray remember what I
told you just now, your Argument owes
its Force to a palpable Absurdity, and
you know such Weapons do small Ex-
ecution: You suppose God a *necessary*
Agent, now the very Supposition de-
stroys him; for Liberty is a Perfection,
seeing therefore God is Infinite in Per-
fection, you cannot suppose him void
of Freedom, without supposing him not
infinitely Perfect, and by consequence
not God: So that your Discourse runs
thus; If God were God, and not God; if
he Created necessarily a *Species* ab æterno,
and did not Create it; this *Species* would
not be subject to Destruction, and would be
subject to Destruction: This is *cornutum*
argum^{ti}.

argumentum, but because it goars with both Horns, it wounds with neither.

Again: If God lay under a Necessity of Creating *ab aeterno*, why of this World rather than of another? If nothing else lies within the Reach of his Power, a *finite* Perfection has drain'd his creative Faculty: His *Omnipotence* is at a Stop; and by consequence his Infinity, and *Being* at an End: If he can Create something else, what determin'd him to leave all other Creatures in the State of Nothing, and to invest this World with Dignity of Existence? If the Determination came from the Nature of the World, then it requir'd Existence *ab aeterno*, and so must have been *ab aeterno*, without any Obligation to God for its Being: If from God, then he is free, and the Existence of the World is the Effect of his Liberality, not of Necessity; whence it follows, that every Moment it lies at his Mercy, he may thrust every Individual into Nothing, with the same freedom and easiness he drew them out of it.

Some Philosophers (I know) make God a necessary *Agent*, not to suppose him *Idle*; they fancy Laziness becomes his Majesty less than Necessity, and be-

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cause they cannot assign him any other Employment but Creation, they infer he created this World *ab Aeterno*.

These People come within an Ace of the Extravagance of the Poets, who to cut out some Work for their God *Mercury* made him a Post-Boy: But let us take at present these Dreams for Truths, these Fictions for Content: It follows at least he may destroy this World, upon Condition he'll take the Pains to build another; nay, he may raise with one Hand and pull down with the other, for all Eternity; for in this Case it is evident he cannot want Employment, and his Business will equal his Activity: So that to conclude in Spite of the Protection of Absurdity it self, you must confess that every *Species* that exists, is subject to Destruction, and therefore not *a se*.

Theom. Tho' no *Species* be Eternal, Matter may be Eternal.

Euseb. What if it be?

Theom. If it be, these different *Species* which grace the World, might spring out of first Fruitfulness of the Earth, which certainly was more prolific some Ages ago than at present.

Euseb.

Euseb. Ho Sir! We are out of our Way, and just fallen on the Confines of *Democratism*. The last Moment the World was *Ens a se*, and now by the Vertue of some rare Adventure, its transform'd into an *Ens per Accidens*. Seeing you are in a Fit of Fiction, make Use of Fancy before it cool, and say Men are hatcht in Ovens like Chickens in *Agypt*, or that Beasts spring from Muck and Men from Parsely-Beds. I am almost asham'd to confute Absurdities, so gross at first Sight, so palpable, that no Discourse can make them more apparent: What would the World say if you advance this Opinion in Print? They ought to look upon you as Mad or Foolish, if they would do you Right: But I admit the wond'rous Fecundity of the Earth, and ask you how it comes to pass the *Species* of Animals are not Eternal! For either the Earth possess'd this Prolifick Quality *ab Aeterno*, or it did not; if it did not, by what happy Chance did it come by it, if from it self, it must be Eternal, if from another, you admit a distinct Agent, and so our Controversy is at an End: If it did possess this prolifick Vertue *ab Aeterno*, then it produc'd all things *ab Aeterno* (for I

Suppose Matter is a necessary Agent) But if this Vertue be Eternal, methinks, it should still remain, and then we might have the Satisfaction some times to breed Horses out of Quagmires, or reap good Crops of Men, if this producing Quality falls with Age, why is it not quite extinct? Why does the Earth bring forth anything? An inexhaustible Vertue will run upon the Lees in the Space of an Eternity, and end in Sterility. Thus you see your self at a Loss, tho' Matter be Eternal; the more you evade a first Agent distinct from the World, the more you encounter him, and you have nothing left but the Liberty of a Being a Deist or a Fool.

But to give full Satisfaction, I offer you a Reason or two, which seem to conclude, the very Matter cannot be Eternal *a se*. First 'tis evident, of all Beings Matter comes the nearest to Nothing, it has scarce any other Perfection, than that of bare *Existence*, 'tis *pura Potentia*, a meer Capacity: Now upon what Right does this abject Thing challenge the glorious Attribute of *Asseity* and *Eternity*? Before we put it in Possession of such transcendant Titles, both Reason and Justice commands us
to

to examin its Pretensions, on Account of Perfection, it can put in no Claim, for the most vile Insects that creep in Mire, and spring from Corruption, lock up a greater Treasure of Perfections in an Eye alone, than are diffus'd thro' the whole Mass of Matter: If therefore, neither these, nor even Man himself dares aspire to *Independence* and *Eternity*, why should Matter? To adjudge it these incommunicable Predicats on Account of Imperfection, is very extraordinary: Indeed such a Sentence may argue Compassion or good Nature in a Judge, but not one Grain of Justice: Is Beggery a Title to Greatness? Or Peasantry to Nobility? Because I am born a Scavenger, must I challenge a Place at the Counsel Table? Or sue for a Dukedom, because my Family wants a Coat of Arms? Is it not as ridiculous to dignifie Matter with *Aseity* because it borders upon Nothing, as to make it *Independent* because it cannot exist without some Form?

Theom. Its right to Independence is neither founded on Imperfection, nor Perfection, but on its Nature.

Emseb. What do you mean? Is not *Aseity* a Perfection?

Theom. Yes.

Euseb. Therefore the Exigence of a Aseity founded in Matter must be a Perfection; for certainly to claim a Perfection as a Debt, not a Gift, is one; but how do you know this Exigence is founded on the Nature of Matter? A Gentleman's Word will not pass currant amongst Philosophers, as it does amongst Taylors and Vintners: They require Caution, those *Ipse dixit*-Days expir'd with old *Pythagoras*, and according to the present Constitution of Mankind, will not revive in our Time: Tell me then, by what Mysterious Light have you discovered, that Aseity is entail'd on Matter? That its a Branch of Birth-Right? I conceive an Assertion may be prov'd two Ways, either by Authority or Reason; could you *sub-pœna* a Brace of Eternal Witnesses they might go far to the clearing the Point in Controversy, but there are few of that Stamp in the Nation; they are as rare as a reasonable Atheist: Seeing therefore Witnesses cannot relieve you, you must retreat to Reason; regale us I beseech you with a Demonstration.

Theom. We find by Experience, that Matter is not liable to Corruption; tho'

tho' Compounds rise, and fall, it stands immoveable; it neither looses any thing by Time, nor gains: There was no more a thousand Years ago than to Day, nor will there be less in future Ages, than at present, it therefore will be *Eternal*, and if it will be *Eternal*; it has been *ab aeterno*.

Euseb. You prove well, that as Matter cannot be corrupted, so it cannot be generated, and by consequence will be *Eternal*; so far you are in the Right: But then it does not follow it was *a se ab aeterno*, because it might have been Created; for the Impossibility of Creation cannot be inferr'd from any true Principle: Nay, I have prov'd already that Matter could not be *a se*, so that your Argument falls to the Ground, and without any Prejudice to the Force of my Proof.

Secondly, If Matter be *ens a se*, an *eternal*, *necessary*, and *independent* Being, it is *actus purus*, i. e. it had no Capacity to receive any more Perfections, than those it possess'd *ab aeterno*; for there is no Reason why it should possess one, more than another: Therefore *ab aeterno* it either possess'd no Perfection, which destroys the Hypothesis, or *all*: If it

had *all*, it cannot receive any more; therefore if it be *Eternal a se, necessary* and *independent*, it is *actus purus*, incapable of any further Perfection.

Again, if it be *necessary* and *independent*, it cannot loose any Perfection it had *ab aeterno*; because if it could, that might be, and might not be, and by consequence would not be intrinsically Necessary; besides as it depends of it self alone for its Being, so nothing distinct can possibly destroy it.

Hence it follows, that whatever is *Eternal a se, necessary* and *independent*, must be unalterable; for all Change is a Motion, either from a greater Perfection to a Less, or from a Less to a Greater, or at least to an Equal: Seeing therefore an *eternal, necessary*, and *independent* Being is *actus purus*, incapable either of acquiring, or loosing any Perfection, it must be *unalterable*.

Hence it follows, that Matter cannot be *eternal, necessary*, and *independent*: First, because it is an incompleat Being, and has a natural Tendency to Forms; 'tis (as I may say) out of its Element, in a State of Violence and *Longing*, untill it compasses a perfect Body, and cannot naturally Exist without the actual Exercise

cise of that Office : To be therefore a Part is one of Matter's Perfections, because nothing can naturally desire, what is not a natural Perfection : Now I have prov'd already, that no perfect *Species* could be *Eternal*, therefore Matter did acquire some new Perfection when those *Species* began, which it had not before; hence it follows, that Matter is neither *actus purus*, nor *unalterable*, because in time it acquir'd a Perfection which it had not *ab aeterno*, and by consequence is not *a se*, necessary, and independent; therefore it was Created by an All-powerful *Agent*, which we call God.

Theom. We are bemir'd in *Aristotle's materia prima*, and slipt into the System of substantial Forms : You would scare me with old Peripateticism, and put off obsolete Dreams for Demonstrations : That counterfeit Coin is call'd in, and only goes currant at *Salamanca* in Spain, where Antiquity has the same Charms as Novelty has with us : They stick to old Opinions, as they do to old Fashions, and will no more part with *Aristotle*, than the *Chinese* with their Beards : But we have degraded the Stagirite. To swear in *verba magistri*, is an Incroachment upon our Liberty; infine Sir, ma-

tertia prima is an empty Name, and substantial Forms a groundless Invention; and your Demonstration is void of all Force, because it relies on Fiction and Vision.

Euseb. I neither declare for *Aristotle*, nor *Gassendus*, nor have a greater Inclination for *Des Cartes*, than the *Chymists*: My Proof runs thro' any Hypothesis, and is calculated up for all Systems. Tell me your Opinion, that I may model my Argument, and point it against your Evasion.

Theom. What we call *Matter*, is nothing but a Complex of various simple Bodies *ab aeterno*; they by an innate Quality scower about, and by a mutual Concurrence frame those Compounds, that stock the Universe: The Variety only consists in the Diversity of Combinations: When such a Number of *hot, dry, and moist Atoms* cling together, up starts a *Horse*; the same may be said of *omixts*: They differ meerly accidentally, and have no other Form (if I may say so) then the *Taleity* of the Mixture; hence it comes, that Matter is not subject to Changes, and is only capable of a new extrinick Perfection: Besides those Atoms being perfect in themselves,

selves, have no bent, or inclination to Compound: They are as content in a State of Separation, as of Composition; and as willingly form a *Worm* as a *Monarch*: Tho' therefore *Species* were not *ab eterno a se*, Matter enjoyn'd all its natural Perfections *ab eterno*, and is withal unchangeable, unless you call a new Situation, Alteration, &c. So that you must forge a new Demonstration, if you intend to argue Matter out of *Aseity*.

Euseb. I suppose you do not expect a Confutation of your System, it lies at present quite out of my Way, and can be no Part of my Task: I discharge my Duty, if I show, that the *atomistical Hypothesis* does not weaken the Force of my Reason: Notwithstanding I must tell you, a wise Man will not easily believe, that dull and dead Atoms are able to frame a living Creature: For certainly Life is something more than the bare Motion of *hot, moist and dry Atoms*, and an Atheist must have as mean Opinion of himself as of God, before he can assert, that the only Distinction between him and an Insect, lies in the Difference of the Mixture: Methinks, such an Opinion might dispose
him

him to Modesty: Nay, of all Men he should be the least Presuming; who acknowledges such a base Extraction, and puts no other Difference between him and a Brute, than between *fine Holland* and *Scotch Cloth*: Yet upon Experiment, these are the great Pretenders of Mankind, who while they confess themselves so near ally'd to Beasts, adore their Excellencies, and fall down before *Calves*, as the *Jews* did in the Wilderness. indeed he that wants leisure or Capacity to Examine his Nature, or perswades himself his better Part is Immortal, may grow vain upon a kind Presumption, or the real Conviction of such a Towering Perfection: But for a Man to be proud who pretends to demonstrate his own Baseness, is little less than Frenzy: Now pray attend, Atoms (you say) have an intimate Principle of Motion; Nature as we find by Experience, always works some End; therefore that Motion of the Atoms has some End; we cannot discover the Ends better than by the Effects, the Effects are Compounds, therefore the End of that Motion inherent in the Matter is compound; hence it follows, that actually to constitute a compos'd Body, is a Perfection
of

of the Matter, because it is a Possession of the End, to which Nature inclines it; but it did not possess this End *ab Aeterno*, therefore *ab Aeterno* it wanted some Perfection, of which it was capable; Therefore 'tis alterable, and by Consequence not Eternal *a se*, besides, if it had not all the Perfections *ab Aeterno* it possesses in Time, it had no Perfection *ab Aeterno*; because there is no Reason why it should have one, and not all others of which it is capable: Wherefore I conclude it was not *ab Aeterno a se*, neither will it avail you to reply, these Perfections are accidental; first because *Ens a se* can have no accidental Perfection, for whatever it has is necessary and indentifi'd with its Nature; and secondly, because it is *Actus purus*, as I said before.

Theom. This is ridiculous to Excess! What if a Ball of Wax was *a se*, could I not mould it into a Cube, not melt it down? You return a Paradox for an Answer.

Euseb. You must not wonder if one Absurdity begets another, a ridiculous Consequence flows from a ridiculous Antecedent; and one Paradox is the best Proof of another. To expect Reason
from

from Nonsense, is to gape after Impossibilities. If you suppose a Sphere of Wax Eternal *a se*, either that Figure was necessary, or it was not; if it was not, who cast it in that Form? Why was it a Sphere, rather than a Cube? If it owes the Determination to some exterior Principle, then the Wax was not *a se*, because the Figure was not: If that Figure was necessary, the Nature of the Wax requir'd it; if the Nature of the Wax requir'd it, it can be destroyed no more than the Nature: But if you suppose that Sphere *a se*, the Nature of the Wax cannot possibly be destroyed, therefore neither can the Figure; indeed that Wax would be very stubborn, but Impossibilities are an inflexible Generation, and can no more be brought over to Reason, than Atheists. The World therefore is not Eternal *a se*, nor any Part of it; whence it remains, that a most powerful Author drew it out of Nothing, to whom we owe our Being, and Conservation, and by Consequence Homage.

Theom. Is this all you have to say to the Point?

Euseb. I could enlarge on the Matter; but for the present, I leave the
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Arguments to your Consideration. We lie under a *Dilemma*, if they hold good, they will stand upon Record against you, if not, against me: Which I suppose will be no unacceptable Revenge. You will have the Satisfaction of Laughing at the Vanity of the Attempt, and of applauding your Abilities into the Bargain.

D I A L O G U E XX.

The 6th. Proof. Tho' there were a God he cannot convince those Atheists of his Being, who refuse Assent to the forgoing Proofs.

Euseb. I Have worsted you in the Judgment of Authority, and have dispatch'd Part of your Exceptions: We are come to the last Tribunal of Reason, and I have the good Fortune to foil you here, our Suit is at an End; and certainly I have all the Grounds in the World to hope a favourable Issue, for Reason never reverses the Sentence of Universal Tradition, when back'd with a hundred Reasons.

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In the first Place; you cannot admit the World to be Eternal *a se*, without striking upon a manifest Absurdity; now Absurdities cannot possibly flow from Truth; they are the Children of Fallhood, and the Offspring of Error.

Theom. If you can shew that the *Hypothesis* of the World's Eternity leads to any thing that clashes with Reason, or borders upon Error, without Doubt I lie at your Mercy: The *Consequence* takes after the *Antecedent*, and 'tis impossible for that to be ridiculous, without this be erroneous.

Euseb. You have granted, that if there be a God, he can manifest his Being to Men, by some sensible Effect of his Omnipotence.

Theom. I have, and a Man must take Pleasure in Folly, and dote on Contradictions, before he can deny a Truth so Evident: For to confess an Omnipotent Being, and to refuse him the Power of manifesting himself by some exterior Sign, to a Creature, who is furnish'd with Senses, and endow'd with Reason is a flat Contradiction.

Euseb. I am glad to hear so ingenuous a Confession: Pray therefore take
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Notice; if God intended to discover himself by an exterior Sign, he would choose some stately Work, worthy of his Power, and suitable to his Grandure.

Theom. He would.

Euseb: Let us then suppose for some Moments, that you and I slept in our Beds of pure Possibility, that we are now, what we were a thousand Years ago, very Nothings: Let us suppose besides that all things else fall into the same State of Impotence; that an infinite Being exists alone, and resolves to communicate his Perfections to some Creatures, and to manifest himself to Man, the most perfect Piece of his Power. Immediately one *Fiat* calls a glorious Fabrick from an Eternal *Nothing*, uniform in Variety, and various in Uniformity: A Creature dignified with Reason, set of with Senses and enrich'd with a hundred Noble Qualities marches at the Head of this new-born Multitude: He admires at the stately Architecture of the Infant World, the Multiplicity of Parts, the stupendious Contrivance, and Harmony of the whole: Can he, or his Posterity by the Force of Reason come to the Knowledge of
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the Deity that made it? According to your Principles they cannot: For tho we suppose this new fram'd World, a thousand Times more perfect, than that we live in, they may conclude it was Eternal as now you do, and they have a better Plea, because we suppose it more perfect. 'Tis true the first Man knows he is not Eternal, but of what Standing the World is, or how he comes to be, is a Mystery: he may ascribe his good Luck to Chance, or his own Nature, as well as you: But if we come to his Descendants, they will be at a Puzzle for the Original of their Genealogy: They can arrive at the Knowledge of it, either by Tradition, or Reason; and if by either, or both these Means, they can be ascertain'd: They had a Beginning, why are not you assur'd we had one? For which way shall they meet with a more diffusive Tradition, or more pregnant Arguments than we have for the Beginning of this World? If the Structure of the new suppos'd World be admirable to amazement; that of the Old is surprizing: If there appear in the Constitution of that, as many Characters of Wisdom and Power, as Parts; the very Blind may read as
many

many in the Frame of this : That may open us a Perspective of Miracles ; and this unfolds a Scene of Wonders : If therefore in spight of Tradition and Reason, in spight of the most visible Characters of Wisdom and Power, infinite, maugre as many Wonders as there are Objects without us, or Veins, Muscles and Arteries within us, Atheists deny this World had any other Author than its own Necessity, and Independency ; why may not the Atheists of the new World elude the Force of Tradition and Reason by your wretched Evasion ? they may certainly entrench themselves in the *Hypothesis* of Eternity, and out-face (by your Example) down right Demonstration.

Theom. Tho' indeed these new Gentlemen would be at a *Nonplus*, as well as we ; and I believe that would vye incredulous with this, yet God might manifest himself many Ways : First, By infusing into all Men as clear a Conviction of his Being, as we have of the first Principles of Reason : Secondly, By teaching them some Demonstration, that he created the World, which lies out of Sight : And thirdly, By divine Revelation. These Methods are very feasible,

fible, and I fancy would do the Business.

Euseb. First, All those Ways are supernatural: Now 'tis very strange that Omnipotence should want Power to frame a Work capable to Point out to a Rational Creature its divine Contriver, without the Assistance of Miracles: But again, tho' God should infuse into all those Inhabitants of the new World, as clear a Knowledge of their Origin, as of the first Principles, Do you think all Debates would vanish at the Approach of that glairing Light? Have not Men deny'd the Truth of these great Principles in Spite of Conviction, altho' they had no other Temptation to be foolish, but the Pleasure of Contradicting? And why should you expect in your Case a more reasonable Procedure? Especially when the Omnipotent Motives of Lewdness and Epicurism that debauch your Understanding, would corrupt and bribe theirs: For they may oppose against Demonstration these Arguments which support your Obstinacy, and buy up your Infidelity. I cannot conceive how it is possible for an Infinite Mercy, and an Infinite Justice to meet in the same Subject, how Justice can pardon, or Mer-
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cy punish; therefore there is no such Thing.

To say something can be made of nothing, is to cross upon Reason; to build new Principles upon the Ruin of the old, and by Consequence to break down the Inclosure between Sophistry and Demonstration, Truth and Falseness; therefore *the World was not created*: Nay, 'twas possible to be *ab Aeterno*, therefore *it was*. What Evidence can be secure from the Attempts of these Arguments? They dare attack *Euclide*, and huff *Apollonius*: If resolute Denyals pass content for Proofs, and Possibilities for Demonstrations, we pass all Things on Courtesy. A Man that dares look Fool in the Face, may do strange Execution; he may deny us into Nothing, and by the sly Turn of a Possibility demonstrate us out of Being.

Theom. Nay a Man that is resolv'd to push Folly Home, may puzzle a fix Form Philosopher, yet the Defeat of the one, will prove more glorious, than the Victory of the other, but then I thought Evidence carried all before it, and captivated more Understandings than the Grand Senior has enslav'd Christians.

Euseb.

Euseb. Evidence indeed is generally victorious, but oftentimes 'tis overmatch'd: A Man seconded by Prejudice, or Interest, stands immoveable; you must change his Circumstances before he will alter his Opinion: His Understanding never changes Sides, unless Interest marches off first: But when this wheels about, that follows through a thousand Errors. The Sun has Beams enough not only to fill, but even to dazzle a well depos'd Eye; but if a Film crosses the Pupil, or a Cataract interposes between the Chrystial, in Spite of Light the Organ remains in Obscurity, and the Patient finds the Effects of Night and the Horror of Darkeness at Mid-Day: Thus the Cause stands with the Understanding: I grant those People we talk of would have Proofs sufficient to content a well dispos'd Understanding, and so have you; but if they are haunted with the Spirit of Dispute and Obstinacy, if Interest stands against Creation and God, the Intellect falls presently into Disorder, Mists arise and Fumes interpose; and when 'tis thus dismounted, Evidence by a Kind of *Antiparistasis* produces Obstinacy not

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Conviction, and rather hardens the Heart than softens the Brain.

Your second Means is expos'd to the same Exceptions: I do not question, but God can draw a Legion of Demonstrations from the Constitution of the World to evince he made it, which are not within the Reach of our Knowledge: Yet if the new found World Atheists are of the same Temper with those of our Horizon, they will dispute their Ground, and never surrender, till the Fire of Hell acts upon Sense, and so conveys Truth into the Understanding by eternal Sufferings: For as you (against the common Vote of Mankind, against the plain Conviction of Reason) cast Creation out of Doors, both as needless and impossible, what hinders them from following your Footsteps? And opposing to all Demonstrations, these groundless Conjectures, that support your Incredulity? If you say a Man that dares fly in the Face of Evidence, is a Monster, that he ought rather be caned than argu'd into Reason, you are in the Right; but these Monsters over-run the World, they are grown so common, that they rather please than astonish; for now an inflexible Obstinacy, and a mighty

ty Wit are become Synonymous, and 'tis far more warrantable and modish to stand close to Interest, than to yield to the Force of Reason.

I cannot guess why Revelation should prove more effectual, than Demonstration; these inward Lights are always accompany'd with some Absurdity; and tho' they Illuminate, they leave us in the Dark: An unwearied Man may easily be deluded, he may mistake Temptation for Inspiration, and the Voice of God for the Spirit of Fornication: We remember yet what mad Pranks our Fathers saw the last Age, when People rebell'd by divine Impulse, and executed their Prince on a Scaffold by Revelation; when they bleed their fellow Subjects Purse, and then their Veins, by the Command of the Spirit; when they transgress'd God's Laws by Providence, and those of Nature by Inspiration: And as Men fanatically inclin'd, take every Impulse of Passion for divine Revelation; so they who love Libertinism look upon Revelation it self, as an Illusion, they will admit of nothing Divine, but Sensuality, they examine Truth by the Standard of Pleasure, and whatever baulks Appetite is Spleen and Vision:

sion: One wou'd think the Revelation of the World's Creation made so many thousand Years ago to *Moses*, is certain, almost to Evidence; it has undergone the examen of Ages, and the *Criticisms* of obstinate Incredulity, it has triumph'd over Ignorance, conquer'd Malice, and sham'd those it could not convince; I do not see how a particular Revelation can be more perswasive than that which has been put a Thousand times to the Test; nor how this can force an Understanding against the By-asse of Interest, that will not come over to the other: For still you may run to your old Retrenchment, *The World was possible ab eterno*; therefore it was *ab eterno*; *id est*, you may take Begging the Question for Proving, and Impudence for Reason.

Theom. What think you; if God should take you and me by the Hair, as you fancy an Angel did *Habacuck*, and post us away to the imaginary Spaces above the Empyrium? If he should appear in Majesty, and regale our Sight with a Scene of Creation?

Euseb. Why; I think you would be amazed, but not convinc'd; you mount-
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410 *A Gentleman instructed, &c.*
ted an Atheist, and would return
one.

Theo. That's strange!

Euseb. 'Tis so indeed; yet not more
strange, than that after so many Proofs
of a Divinity, you remain in Infidelity:
For if God did appear, he must borrow
some sensible Shape; human Eyes are
too feeble to gaze upon a Spirit: The
Glory of a Divinity dazzles 'em: They
sink under the Splendour of the Omni-
tent. Now, he has appear'd already un-
der the Form of Fire and Smoak to a
whole Army, not able to bare his Ma-
jesty, and this Appearance is made so
credible, that he who will not be-
lieve so many thousand Eyes, must be
a Fool to believe two: Again, how do
you know but this World eternally
Floated (like a swimming Island) in the
vast Ocean of those imaginary Spaces?
And by a lucky Puff of Chance, or
Storm of Atoms was waisted over to
you in the Nick of Time? These Ca-
sualties are (I hope) Possible: Besides
that unlucky Principle *ex nihilo nihil fit*
might gravel your Understanding above,
as now it does below, for Situation
makes no alteration in Truth or Fals-
hood;

hood ; if it be evident here, it will be evident there, and if it appear Sophistry in the new World ; why should it pass for Demonstration in the Old ? But if this should chance to work upon you, your fellow Atheists would be where they are, unless God should fall upon new Creations, and cure their Infidelity by condescending to their Pride, and satisfying their Curiosity : But then you wou'd condemn him to a Drudgery more insupportable than that of looking after Flies. He must (it seems) Work, if not for his Living, at least for Adoration : He must fawn on Atheists to deserve their Protection, and serve an Apprenticeship to be acknowledged for their Master.

T₂ DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E XXII.

The most plausible Exceptions of Atheists against the World's Creation are refuted.

Euseb. **I** Have done with my Arguments, which must be very satisfactory, unless you can invalidate 'em by urgent Reasons, and prove by Evidence *a priori*, or at least from the very Nature, and Constitution of the World, That it was impossible to be Made: Favour me therefore with a short List of your Reasons, Range 'em (if you please) in Rank and File, Draw 'em up to the best Advantage; and make the most of 'em, yet I fancy, when all is done, you must establish the World's Eternity by begging heartily, not by proving it; and if I stay, till you convince it by Reason, the World may have an End, before you prove *hazard* or necessity gave it a Beginning.

Theo. In the first place; we cannot give the World a Beginning without forcing Reason, and imposing on our Understanding. This Doctrine must be supported

supported on the Ruins of first Principles, and whosoever abets it, must abjure those great Truths, that Mankind avows to be the Standard and Measure of all others. *Ex Nihilo, Nihil fit* is the common Voice of Nature, 'tis too clear to be prov'd, it shines on the Understanding, as the Sun does on our Eyes: And we can as soon find Night at Mid-Day, as Fallacy in the Axiom, yet if we admit Creation, we must dash out this Principle, and by the same Authority casheere all others, and then, (as blind Men) we shall walk in the Dark, we shall discourse without Rule, argue without Reason, and (like the Dog in the Fable) chop at the Shadow for the Substance *i. e.* we shall mistake Falshood for Truth, and Error for Demonstration.

Secondly, 'Tis an undoubted Maxim in Philosophy, that to boulder up an Opinion, we must not multiply Things without Necessity, *Non sunt multiplicanda antea sine Necessitate*. Now there is no need to forge an infinite Being, for the World might be of it self *Ab Aeterno*: The most subtle Logician in the World, can never make it appear, that the *Hypothesis* imployes a

Contradiſtion *in Terminis*, or even by Inference. — To what purpoſe do we entangle our ſelves in Difficulties? Why do we frame an Omnipotent, wiſe and juſt Creator, with a Thouſand other pompous Titles, both unintelligible and frightful? Have Fears and Apprehenſions ſuch raviſhing Charms? Cannot our Underſtandings be pleaſed unleſs they are *Nonplus'd*? Nor be ſatiſfied unleſs we hang them on the Ten-
ters?

Thirdly, A Thouſand Parts of the Univerſe ſeem not only ſuperfluous, but noxious: They are too vile even to make a Show, and are only fit to increaſe the Number of Creatures, ſo that they reach not the Quality of Mutes, that ſerve (at leaſt) for Pomp and Oſtentation: Yet were they barely without Employment, without Station or Deſign. I would let them lie quiet in the State of Idleneſs, but alas, they were Executioners by Nature, as well as Office, and enter into the World to plague it: For Example, if there were a God can you imagine he would ſo far abaſe his Power, or prostitute his Wiſdom, as to produce Lice and Fleas? That he would foul his Fingers with
Toads?

Toads? Or condemn his Omnipotence to dig Flies out of Dunghills? Methinks it would suit better with three grand Attributes of a Deity, *Power, Wisdom* and *Goodness*, to clear the World of these Plagues, than to stock it: Plagues I call them, for their very End is Mischief: Some torments a Man, others kill him, and the least troublesome molest him. You know Sir what a Figure *Domitian* makes in Story, for his unbecoming Diversions; if it be beneath a Man to slay Vermin, 'tis certainly below God to make them. Had I an Inclination to believe the World was made, I would turn Manichæan, and rather admit two first Principles than one: Now if these Insects were not created, why should I admit a creating Principle of any thing else? Come, Sir, let us say rather, all Things were of themselves, than vote God the Drudgery of making them. They are below the Care of an infinite Majesty, and the Power of the Omnipotent. I am perswaded 'tis less irrational to deny a God, than to assign him the most servile Employments; first, of producing Lice, Fleas and Toads, and then of con-

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serving

serving them. I have many other Exceptions against your Opinion; but these suffice to discard it even of Probability.

Euseb. You have propos'd your Difficulties, I will return an Answer. To the First; indeed a Man cannot persuade himself the World was the Product of Necessity, or Chance without affronting Reason, and tricking his Understanding: To allie those infinite Perfections of Eternity and Independance with the vileness of creeping Insects, is to bring to one Centre Extreame that can never meet: 'Tis to raise Vermin above their Level, and pull down those vast Perfections below theirs: 'Tis to invest Toads and Frogs with the Appertenances of the Divinity, and to cloath 'em like the Daw in the Fable with gaudy Plumes, that belong to another: But when we make God Author of the World, we stumble upon no Absurdity: For tho' the World be a stately Work, yet I conceive it neither surpasses the Power, nor the Skill of a most powerful, and most wise Artist. *Omnipotence* has certainly an excellent Knack at making, and an *infinite Wisdom* at contriving. Seeing therefore the
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Perfection of the Work is not above the Abilities of the Architect, we do not on this Account transgress any known Principle if we ascribe it to him.

Indeed by admitting Creation, I banish your *ex nihilo nihil fit* from the Number of Principles; but I do not at all intrench upon Nature, nor encroach upon the Prerogative of the Understanding by out-lawing it: 'Tis guilty of Intrusion, and holds the Place by the favour of Ignorance: Those People who first Principled it, were without Principles themselves, they knew not the Extent of Omnipotence, or invaded its Priviledges. An Omnipotent Power can do any thing that is possible, *i. e.* that implies not a Contradiction: Show me (if you can) a Contradiction that an *All-powerful Being* should make something without the Help of previous Matter; if you cannot, your Principle is justly degraded: Nor will other Maxims be involv'd in its disgrace; they'll keep their Posts in spite of Opposition, and receive submission from Reason, wher'e they meet it: But if you suffer your Maxim to be restrain'd, and not let it ramble into the other World, I'll em-

brace it with open Arms, as *Ocellus* and *Aristotle* did: Yet in this Case it will signifie no more, than that all natural Generations suppose a Subject; and in this Sense I say of your Principle, what one said of *Euclid's* first Demonstration? They were so plain, that an *Ass* could not miss them: In a Word, ex *Nihilo*, *Nihil* fit. Nature can give Being and Life to no new Productions unless she has a Subject to work on: In this Point she has no Prerogative above a Carver, tho' in the other she far exceeds, for her Works are more fine and delicate, she gives Life, the others Skill stops at Figure: But if we look upon God, your Principle is out of Doors; he cannot only work on Matter, but make it: This argues you'll say an Excess of Power: 'Tis true, but yet it does not out-stretch Omnipotence.

To the Second, I answer, your Argument falters in every Part; it proves too much, and by Consequence just Nothing: It stands for either Side of the Contradiction, and therefore supports neither. For as you argue thus, *'Twas possible for the World to exist of it self*, therefore, we must not father it upon any superior Agent: So by the same Logick I may conclude, that

that either all the Materials, that compose *London* rang'd themselves in that fine Order, we see them, or, that Chance and Hazard blundered upon it, because either Way is possible: Nay, methinks your Argument pleads for any Absurdity: 'Tis possible for Stones to speak, therefore for ought we know they do, when they are alone, and if they keep Silence in our Company, 'tis out of the same Policy Baboons were mute in *America* (as the Indians told the Spaniards) viz. to avoid their Cruelty. 'Tis possible for an excellent Watch, to start up from a casual Combination of Atoms; Let us therefore out-law *Tompion*, and transport the whole Company of Watch-makers into *Virginia* to plant Tobacco: their Art is superfluous in *England*, as well as their Persons, since Possibility has set up Shop, Watches will pour in upon us by thousands, we may take them up as the Jews did Quails, and when we have made our own Provision, Pleasure a Friend with half a Dozen.

Theom. You are in a Vein of pleasantry, but Arguments are seldom laugh'd out of Countenance. If Possibility be

a weak Proof, Mirth is a feeble Solution.

Euseb. You wrong me, Sir, I am as serious as the Matter will bear, and if my Discourse has any thing of Force, you are beholding to the Subject for the Diversion. A Buttoon under a grave Disguise, may be mistaken for a venerable Alderman, but when he is cas'd, the Alderman retires to make room for Scaramouch. To treat Fooler-ies with Respect, is to misplace Ceremony, and not to lay them open, is but a Degree from abetting them.

Theom. If Contempt can baffle an Argument, the most strict Demonstrations are not secure: By your Leave, Sir, you either mistake the Stress of my Reason, or fling in a handful of piquant Railleries to evade it: Pray attend, From this Antecedent, *Twas possible for the World to be ab Aeterno a se*, this Inference follows, therefore *it did exist*: For if the World was possible *ab Aeterno*, 'tis a necessary and independent Being, but 'tis evident that a necessary and independent Being is Eternal, therefore, if the World were possible *ab Aeterno*, 'tis manifest it did exist *a se ab Aeterno*; and therefore, all Recourse to a Deity is,

is vain and superfluous! What Absurdity can be found in so plain a Discourse, but that a Man of Wit did not comprehend it?

Euseb. Your Argument with these Amendments is still defective; it proves not at all the Question, but impudently begs it. For it amounts to this, that the World was *ab Aeterno*, therefore, it was *ab Aeterno*. If you intend to make any thing of your *Enthymem*, prove first the Antecedent, and then we will consider what it is to be done with the Consequence. Now I have already prov'd the World could not possibly exist *ab Aeterno* (as you suppose) without any other Proof, than a bare Assertion. In the mean Time, methinks this Argument proves as forcibly the Contradiction of your *Thesis*; 'twas not possible for the World to exist of it self *ab Aeterno*, therefore, it did not. You will put me without doubt to the Proof of the Antecedent, and with Reason; for till that be establish'd, Nothing can be concluded: But then the same talk lies on your Hands, and till you have evinc'd that 'twas possible for the World to exist of it self *ab Aeterno*, Your Conclusion must lie dormant.

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To the third I answer: to pronounce on Things at Random, either marks a great Pride or a superlative Ignorance: You cannot judge which Springs are useful in a Watch, which are superfluous, unless you comprehend the Frame of that artificial Fabrick; and certainly you would conclude very ill, that such a Wheel was needless, because you did not understand its Office. The World is a curious Engine compos'd of Ten Millions of secret Springs, do you know the Nature of each? If you do, ~~not~~, pray dissect them, and expose the Anatomy to our Contemplation? If you do, *not* you are unfit to sit on the Bench; your Sentence is both rash and erroneous, and you deserve to stand at the Bar for having disgrac'd the Tribunal. You must remember this Axiom of St. Thomas, *perfecta Bonitas in rebus creatis, non inveniretur, nisi esset ordo Bonitatis*, the Perfection of Creatures would be defective, if there were no Degrees, no Order of Perfection: We should tarnish the Lustre and impair the Beauty of the Universe, if we diminish'd the Multitude, or temper'd the Disproportion of so many Things, that by a most admirable Disfention, and a most concording Discord

cord conspire to the Grace and Harmony of the Whole: Had you been call'd to Counsel by the Maker of the World, you would have perswaded him to frame it all of Gold or Diamonds; as that unskilful Painter, who not being able to copy out the charming Features of *Helen*, hid them together with his Ignorance under an embroidered *Manteau*, and so instead of a fair Woman drew Nothing, but shining Drapery. No Creature is superfluous, that can proclaim its great Master's Glory, and Majesty; this is a noble Employment, worthy of the Seraphins, yet not above the Capacity of Flies, and Spiders. Vile Insects are quickned by the Almighty, and nothing but an Omnipotent Hand can Frame 'em: The Power of your *Alexander's* and *Cesar's*, was never able to breath Life into a Worm: The one pillag'd the *East* indeed, and welter'd in Blood and Slaughter of Innocents; the other like a Tempest swept all the *West* before him; yet after they had butcher'd a Million of Men, they were not able to give Life to a Caterpillar: Besides, how dare you term these poor Creatures idle, of whom God makes use to confound the Pride
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of Atheists, and to read continual Lessons of Humility to all Men. These Gentlemen are incredulous, because they over-rate their Parts; they suppose, if there were a God, their piercing Wits would make strange Discoveries, and because the Majesty of a Deity dazles their battish Eye-Sight, they rather chuse to plunge into Infidelity, than to acknowledge their Ignorance: To cure this insolent Frenzy, God has flung these puny Creatures in your Way; he bids you examin the fine Contexture of each Part if you can, the Use of every Muscle, the Nature of their Souls, and of all those hidden Springs, that cause Life and Motion; and when you have learnt this *A, B, C*, it will be time enough to ascend to more sublime Contemplation. Now Sir, neither you, nor the greatest Philosopher that ever breath'd, can give a tolerable Account of the most despicable Insect: You know neither its Nature, nor half its Proprieties: You are as ill inform'd of its Causes, as of its Effects; and the various Systems of Generation, and Corruption are but so many Demonstrations of God's Power and Man's Weakness. So that God lays before you these Vermin

as a Remedy against Pride, and what is more, against Atheism: He blunts those Darts you level against him by interposing Flies and Lice; he disarms your Insolence, and strikes out of your Hands those Arguments you imploy against him. I cannot (say you) comprehend God; an infinite Being passes my Conception; therefore *there is no such Thing*: You might as well infer, that all you see, is nothing but a Scene of Fallacy and Illusion; that you, and I, are meer Fantasms, and Spectres, the Product of Imagination; for there is not one single Thing in the whole Mass of Creation, you comprehend. Your Understanding falls under the Weight of a Straw, you cannot tell whether it has Parts, or no Parts before the Division; you know neither the Nature of a Stone, nor the Properties of a Worm; you are a Stranger even in your own House; tho' you Think, Speak and Move; Thoughts, Speech, and Motion puzzles you; we have Assurance indeed, there is such Things, but if we press the Inquiry a little farther, we must expect small Satisfaction. What Man (who finds his Understanding pos'd by such ordinary and trivial Instances, who flags under the

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the Consideration of almost Nothing) will be so bold, and at the same time so foolish, as to question God's Existence, because he cannot comprehend it? Now, tho' all those Things you are pleas'd to call idle, had no other End, but to gravel the great Pretenders to Omniscience to confound their Pride, and to heal their unreasonable Incredulity by Induction, they would render very good Service both to their deluded fellow Creatures, and to their omnipotent Creator.

Besides, we have a particular Tenderness, as well as value of our Bodies; we rack our Thoughts, and even torment our Consciences to please 'em; they must be pamper'd at the Expence of our Souls; tho' they burn for the Debauch hereafter. To cure this raging Transport, God applies a loathsome, but sovereign Remedy: He shews us, what our idoliz'd Bodies are by the Infection of *Lice*, *Worms* and *Toads* they produce: And oftentimes this humbling Spectacle of Mortality, frights us more effectually to our Duty, than the Prospect of the tormenting Instruments of Fire and Brimstone, Darknes and Despair. Did these poor Gentlemen, who
whine

whine away at a Female's Feet their Happiness, Money and Souls too, but seriously consider, that the Object of their Worship must once become Food to those vile Creatures you both condemn and abhor; that those Eyes they admire to Adoration, will once set in Dust, and be drown'd in putrefaction; that those Cheeks (that Frenzy stiles the Seat of the *Graces*) will be transform'd, not only into the Throne, but even into the Nature of Toads, Worms and Serpents; did they (I say) but consider these obvious, but moving Truths, they would remove their Affections to more noble Objects, and then they wou'd confess Vermin is more useful than they imagin'd.

Again, all these Creatures have many useful Properties we know, and more we know not: Lice, Snails and Worms are Remedies for some Diseases, and I have been acquainted with those who admir'd a Ragout of Maggots. If Toads and Vipers are poisonous, they also afford Antidotes against Poison; and if sometimes they Kill, they as often Save. A Soupe of Vipers is a Medicine both modish, and wholesome; it sweetens the Blood, and inspirits it. Certainly Things
endow'd

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endow'd with such excellent Qualities, are neither superfluous nor idle : No, no ! They both benefit the World, and adorn it. *Deus*, says *St. Austin. Lib. 11. de Civ. Cap. 22. ita artifex magnus in magnis est, ut minor non sit in parvis, quae parva non sua granditate quae nulla est, sed artificis sapientia metienda est*, God is so great a Workman in great Things, that he is not less in small ones ; they are not to be measur'd by their Greatness, because they have none, but by the Wisdom of the Artist.

In fine, Sir, to conclude with *William Bishop of Paris, Nascitur aranea cum lege, libro 6. Lucerna*, God has instructed all Creatures in every Point of their Duty : The very Spider brings into the World its Rules, Book and Torch, and knows its Lesson so soon as 'tis able to learn it. At the first Signal of the Omnipotent, they all fall to Work : The Bee makes innocent Inroads upon Flowers, the Silk-Worm spins out its own Entrails, and weaves royal Robes for Princes, the Fish sport in the Waters, the Beasts of Service expect the Commands of their Masters, and small Seeds, tho' dead, give Life to Trees, which bring Men both Pleasure and Pro-

Profit. Nothing is idle; nothing refractory in the World, but Men, who abuse their Liberty to their Shame, and mispend the precious Moments of their Lives to their eternal Ruin.

From the Superfluity of Insects you step over to their Vileness, and indeed, if the first Fault were prov'd home, I would say guilty to the other. For certainly a Thing too inconsiderable to fill any Office in the vast Empire of the Universe, must be meanly provided with Abilities. I suppose, Sir, your Apprehension takes the just Measure of Things, that it never over-flourishes Objects, but agrees exactly with the Pattern: Your Judgment is squar'd by the Model in the Apprehension, and if this be exact, that cannot well be mistaken: Now I have heard Gold shines very gloriously on your Head, and that you fancy Diamonds sparkle more in your Cabinet, than in that of the great *Mogul*: These Things you judge neither below your Care, nor your Esteem; and should I venture to call 'em a base Lumber, vile Minerals, or childish Trifles, you would suspect my Prudence: Yet all the Diamonds of the *Golconda mines*, all the Oar of *Perosi* falls short of the
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Perfection of the vilest Animal. Gold may shine, but cannot breath; Diamonds may glitter, but cannot move; an Insect crawls in a more elevated Sphere; it lives, and this sole Prerogative is above the Reach and Capacity of Mettal; indeed these things are handsomly varnish'd; and 'tis the colour alone, that justifies your Esteem; and makes some Attonement for your Dotage. If therefore, you have not quite forsaken Reason, either esteem Gold or Jewels less, or Insects more; if those are vile, you must think of a new Word to express the Baseness of the other.

I cannot dismiss this Argument, till I have brought the Epicurean Part of it to examen. 'Tis below the Majesty of God (you say) to extend his Care to to the Direction, and Conservation of such despicable Creatures; and then very philosophically you infer he does not; but because this does not serve your Turn, you advance a Step, and tell us they may as well come into the World without his Help, as continue without it.

Your Argument is built on a false Hypothesis; there is no Creature despicable in the whole Universe but the proud Atheist,

Atheist who thinks so, hearken to Aristotle, who saw as far into Nature, as any of our Libertines. *lib. 1. de Partu Animal. cap. 5. Vtiliorum animalium rationem propensionemq; puerili Fastidio sprevisse dignum nequaquam est, cum nulla sit res Natura, in qua non mirandum aliquid inditum habeatur*: To slight the Oeconomy and Perfection of the most imperfect Animal is childish; seeing there is nothing in Nature so minute, and inconsiderable, that has not some Qualities worthy of Admiration. The Vileness of the most abject Worm consists not in the Perfection it possesses; but in those it wants: 'Tis relatively so; and in this Sense, every limited Being is superlatively vile, if compar'd with the boundless Perfections of the Creator. But if we consider them in themselves, they participate some faint Rays of Divine Perfections; they are the Effects of his Power, and Objects of his Love, for had their Natures no Similitude with the Perfections of God, he could not have produc'd them; and did he not love them, he would not: Now to make them worthy both of his Power, and Love, and not of his Care, is ridiculous and impious. Indeed did we travesty God into a Shepherd (as the Poets did Apollo;) did

did we suppose he left his Godhead in Heaven, to feed Flocks on Earth, or that he took up his Habitation with Pismires, or lodg'd in Dunghills with Worms, your Objection would appear reasonable; but we must cast off these Anthropomorphite Principles. To act on Earth, he needs not abandon Heaven; nor dispatch Courriers to intimate his Orders, or Deputies to execute them; he is as necessarily in all Places, as in all Times: He created all Things without Labour, and conserves them without Solitude. The Management of the World neither takes one Grain from his Happiness, nor adds one; he is as much at Leisure since its Creation, as before; and tho' he be without *Emberras*, he is never idle. Besides, tho' we cannot dabble in Pitch without being defil'd, that Aphorism of the Wise Man concerns not him; he shines in Mire, glitters in Dirt, and like the Sun guilds corrupted Carasses, without being tainted or sullied. I therefore conclude your Philosophy is of the same Peice with your Divinity; and both are drawn from the Original of Epicures: They are too foolish, methinks, to trepan a wise Man, and too blasphemous to engage a good Man,

Man, and indeed I am half perswaded you laugh at his System in your Heart, tho' you applaud it in publick; and would easily desert his Beliet if you could enjoy (without Remorse) the Benefit of condescending Moralities.

Theo. Come Sir, you have harangu'd enough upon this Subject: Methinks the Chamber begins to smell of Vermin, we have been upon an uncleanly Topick, to discourse of Worms, Toads and Maggots looks like treading Eels out of Mud; they are unphilosophical Employments, and we will commit the farther Discussion of the Point to a Committee of *Gold-Finders*, or a Club of *Rake-kennels*.

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DIAL.

D I A L O G U E XXI.

The seventh Proof. The palpable Absurdities which follow from no God, demonstrate there is one.

Euseb. **I** Omit many other Arguments, that plead most powerfully for a God; in this Number we may place Miracles, and Prophecies. If ever there were a Miracle, all the Atheists fine *Hypotheses* fall to the Ground, all the Leaves in *Windsor Forest* will not be able to hide the Folly of his Incredulity; for if ever a dead Man has been brought back to Life, it must have been done by a Power above the Energy of natural Causes: To revive a dead Man, is as hard, as to infuse Life into Marble, and I think all the Abilities of Nature can never reach this Operation. Now that such Miracles have been wrought in the World, may be made out as plain Evidence, as the Nature of past Matters of Fact require, *i. e.* by unquestionable Authority, and more can neither rationally be expected nor desir'd.

Again,

Again, to foretel Things that depend meerly upon the Exercise of our free Will, is a manifest Argument of a God, for an Understanding that can foresee what will happen, by the same Perspicacity must know what has happen'd, and *a fortiore*, whatever does actually happen, and by Consequence, whatever can be known, now such a vast Extent of knowledge can only suit with a Being infinitely perfect, at least far superiour to Man: For as *Pindar* takes Notice, *ad futura cacutiunt mentes humana*, Future Events lie out of the Sphere of human Understandings: We see nothing but Obscurity and Darknes before us; we cannot tell what Changes, what Revolutions of Designs may be made in our Breasts before to Morrow; much less what other Men will say or do, a hundred Years hence. Whence the Latins call Foretelling of Things *Divinatio*, as if it was the peculiar Priviledge of the Divinity: And the Prophet *Isay* bids the Gods of the Heathens prove their Title to Worship by Prophecy. *Enunciate quæ ventura sunt in futurum & sciemus quin Dij estis vos.*

Now it is clear beyond Dispute, that Men have foretold Future Events with all their Circumstances; which they could not do, by the Force of human Wit or Industry: Therefore, they receiv'd the Faculty from another who can dive into Futurities, and discover all the Windings and *Meanders* of the Hearts of Men to come, as well as of those who are, and have been: I will call out two or three Prophecies of a hundred which may be found in our Scripture, and desire you to spend a cool and impartial Thought upon them. 3. *Reg. cap. 13.* whilst *Jeroboam* sacrific'd on an Altar to *Baal*, a Prophet cry'd out, *Altare, Altare, hæc dicit Dominus, ecce Filius nascetur domui David, Josias Nomine, & immolabit super te Sacerdotes excelsorum, qui nunc in te thura succendunt, & ossa hominum in te incendent.* This happen'd exactly 361 Years after: 'The Prophet *Isay c. 41.* foretels the Empire of *Cyrus* and his Name 200 Years before he was born. *Daniel* the subversion of the *Chaldean* Monarchy, the Grandure of the *Median, Persian, Grecian* and *Roman* Empires: Nay, he descends to particular Accidents, so that he seems rather to compile a Story of past, than a Prophecy

of future Transactions; yet the Event runs even with his Prediction, 'tis true to a Letter, and therefore to Admiration. Now this alone wounds Atheism mortally, and stabs its grand Principle *There is no God*. For this Discourse is most certain, *Nothing in Nature is able to foresee Things which depend meerly upon the free Will of Man, and will happen some Ages after: But 'tis certain that Men have forseen Things, that depended on the free Will of Man, and did happen several Ages after they were foretold, therefore, there is an intelligent Being above Nature*. You can only evade the Force of the Argument by denying the Matter of Fact; but when you strike upon an Evident Absurdity, and must call in all Records, for there is not any Story in the World more authentick, than that of the Scripture: Now to disbelieve all History out of Fear of being impos'd on, is to play the Fool with Caution, and to stretch Weariness into Stupidity. I intend not to discant on those two Proofs, nor to draw 'em up to their full Advantage; confront them at Leisure, with History both sacred and and profane, compare the Text with Events, push on the Examen not only
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to Exactness, but to the Extremity of Criticism; only stop within the Terms of Reason, and expect no greater Evidence than Things past will bear: Do not first pass Sentence and then examine Evidences, first condemn, and then inquire into the Merits of the Cause; and I am confident you will confess, Things have been both done and foretold, that come not within the Reach of Nature; and therefore you will be oblig'd to acknowledge there is something that commands Nature, and calls those Things (that are not) by their Name, as well as those that are.

Theom. I will take into Consideration your Proposals in due Time; but pray read us the Register of Absurdities: This is your present Task and I am impatient to hear it.

Euseb. I shall open my Indictment with an Accusation able to make a Man's Ears tingle, notwithstanding your Tenets are guilty of the Impeachment. There is no God (you say) No Providence to watch over the Children of Men, no Goodness to reward Virtue, no Justice to punish Vice; Hope of a future Bliss is but a pleasing Imagination, Fear of Torments but a vain Bugbear

bear invented by Melancholy, and improv'd by Custom; does not this accurs'd Doctrine open the Gate to Pride, Arrogance, and Tyranny? Does it not let in upon us Perfidiousness, Perjury and Sacrilege? Does it not invite Mankind to turn off Shame, to cashier Modesty? to plunge into the Mire of Lasciviousness? and in short, to break off all Commerce, all Correspondence with Neighbours, Friends and Relations? Now can any Thing be imagin'd more absurd, than to father such Horrid, such universal Corruptions on the first, greatest and supream Truth? This all Atheists do. For as the prime verity (if there be a God) is, *There is a God*, who rules, directs and governs the Universe; so if there be none, that must be degraded, and this substituted in its Place, *There is no God* who rules, directs and governs the Universe; but this Truth will extinguish Fear, and stifle Reverence, it lets loose the whole Croud of Passions, and exposes the World to Pillage and Rapine; for Men void of Fear, are void of Restraint, and so set up Appetite for the Standard of all their Actions.

Secondly, it will follow, that a Falseness, an Impossibility, a meer Chymera is the Cause of Religion, of Justice, Temperance and Modesty; that it is the Foundation of Peace, Concord and the very Basis, that supports all well-ordered Commonwealths; for the Perswasion of a Deity, the Fear of his Anger, and Hope of his Mercy awe Men more than civil Rewards or Punishments. Now is it not down right Madness, to think that a Chymera, a meer Fiction, that has no Being, but in some deluded Brain, should countenance Vertue and perswade it? should crush Vice, and load it with Shame and Infamy? Whereas the prime Truth in the Atheists Catechism, *There is no God*, leads Men into all Abominations.

Thirdly, It will follow, that Wisdom stifles Vertue, and Error cherishes it; for if there be no God, its Error and Folly to believe there is one, 'tis a Piece of Wisdom to stand up and protest against a Forgery, so prejudicial to Truth, Reason and Sensuality: Its a Piece of Wisdom to maintain that Truth, and Wisdom are Plagues, not only to particular Men, but even to Societies; that they drown Kingdoms in Deluges
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of Corruption, and cut off the Bands of Unity, that knit the Parts together; that they must be clapt under the Hatches, and condemn'd to Darknes and Confinement, as Traitors to Humanity, and Rebels to Government: But then on the other Side, it follows, that Error and Ignorance support Commerce, maintain Tranquility, and enliven Society; that they are to be promoted as the Source and Origin of all Good; that they enlighten the Understanding, polish the Will, and not only render People wise, but good.

Fourthly, That all these Heroes, who have been famous, either for Learning or Piety, were wretchedly mistaken in a Thing of the highest Concern: They fell down before an airy Statue of God, forg'd in the Brain, struck out of Error, and shap'd by Vision, Custom and Education: Whilst Men, unprovided of Wit, destitute of Conscience, of profligate Lives, and of worse Principles, burthen some to their Countries, and scandalous to their very Species, unravel the Truth, and unmask the grand Imposture: Before a Man can believe so potent an Absurdity, he must turn off Reason, and conclude, that the worst of Men

were the best; the most illiterate, the most wise; and those who have ever justly been esteem'd Monsters, the only Ornaments of our Kind.

Fifthly, that to pay Homage and Obedience to God, to fear Punishment, or hope for Reward, are foolish and vain Actions, and wholly opposite to Reason: For to revere, worship and tremble at at a Chymera, is both childish and ridiculous. Its unreasonable and impious in the Bargain: If therefore God sits on the same Level with an Impossibility, if he has no other Being, than what a deluded Understanding is pleased to give him, he is no more to be valued, than all those impossible Combinations, that are spawn'd by Fancy, and crawl in the Imagination.

Sixthly, That Impiety, Sacrilege and Blasphemy, are laudible Actions, and agreeable to the most inviolable Dictates of Reason, For if there be no God, all the Actions that fly in his Face, that attack his Imaginary, and usurp'd Grandure are good: First, Because they are publick Protestations of a Truth. *viz. That there is a God.* And secondly, Because they are efficacious Means to disabuse Mankind, and to withdraw it from

from the erroneous Perswasions of a Deity and Providence. Pray Sir, tell me, are not these most dismal Consequences? Are they not able to chill the Blood? and to cast Humanity into Convulsions? They cannot be thought on without Horror, nor believ'd without Fury. Had I a Hand in the Government, or any Power with the Commons? I would bring all the Abbetters of those lewd Tenets within the Statutes of Treason. They tend directly to the Subversion of Order and Discipline. When Men believe so loose Principles, their Actions cannot be regular. Nothing but Want of Occasions to be Villains can plead for their Honesty: Impotence alone is the Guard of their Innocence, and of their Neighbour's Safety.

Theom. You are smart upon Atheists, and methinks intend to hector them into Religion, rather than convince them. But, Sir, a little Reason goes farther than much Satyr, they are Men of Mettle, and dare look a Rodomantade in the Face: They will not be frightened out of their Opinion with Buckrom Invective.

Euseb. Did you see a Rascal ready to set Fire to your House; or a Bravo

making at your Breast with a drawn Sword: In such Exigences you would lay aside Formality and Ceremony. And I suppose such extraordinary Circumstances would easily justify a little Smartness. This is our present Case. By denying a Deity, you pull up all Restraint, you let loose the whole Kennel of Vices, and hollow in Pride, Rapine and Cruelty to worry us; you do not only lop off the Branches of Subordination, and Government, but tear them up by the Roots, and undermine the very Foundation of Society: We cannot carry on any Commerce, nor live in any Corporation, without trusting sometimes our Neighbour: For it is impossible to make all Matters so sure, as to leave nothing to Honesty and Honour. Trust is the Ground, the Basis and first Principle of Commerce, without this, we must stand at a Defiance with all the World, and place Security in our Power alone. Now if there be no superiour to awe us, no Principle within us that points out Good and Evil, its absurd and foolish to trust any Man; for there is no Ground for such a Confidence in your *Hypothesis*; nothing, that can persuade

swade a Man to sacrifice his Interest to Truth and Justice.

For if there be no God, Man is his own Law, and therefore, can offend no Body but himself; nay, nor can he offend himself; for if he be supreme, whatever he does is right; Let him contrive Plots against Church and State; let him worry the Innocent, or prey upon the Poor; he remains loyal tho' plung'd in Treasons; spotless tho' dipt in Blood; and without Sin, tho' loaded with Crimes. Now such Doctrine must of Necessity unhinge Society, and turn Kingdoms into Heaps of Rubbish, and Piles of Confusion; for it withdraws all those Props that sustain Obedience, and break those Bands that cement Unity. A Man must be made of Ice not to express some Concern at the Approach of so threatening a Danger.

Theom. Of what Danger?

Euseb. Of our Lives and Fortunes; for nothing can secure them but the Impotence of Atheists. We are outlaw'd by your Principles already; and should quickly be clapp'd on the Gallows did your Power correspond with your Intentions, at least to your Maxims. But your Forces are dispers'd; they
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are cantonn'd in Taverns and bawdy Houses, and its hard to draw them into a Body; so that the Government stands because you want Strength to overturn it: We enjoy Liberty because you cannot enslave us; and our Estates, because you dare not invade them.

Theom. These are reflecting Hints and rather plead for Incivility than a God, I had rather connive at the Affront, than revenge it; and attribute it rather to Heat than Advertance.

Euseb. Under Favour, Sir, tho' your Tenets raise my Indignation, I think they deserve it; yet Passion has not dim'd my Understanding: I speak with Reflection; and if my Discourse displease you thank your Principles for the Mortification. I say again, if there be no God, Man has no Superiour, if he has no Superiour, he can be subject to no Law; he can neither do well, nor ill; for Good and Evil are relative Denominations, and suppose a Law, that prohibits the one, and either commands or counsels the other; if he can do no ill, and is perswaded of this impeccable Prerogative, why shall he not glut his Ambition with Treasons, and Murders? His Avarice with Rapins? And his

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Incontinence with his Prostitutions? These Actions sit very easy on Conscience; they spawn on Sense, and charm Nature; nay, according to your grand Maxim, they deserve the Name of Virtues, as well as Obedience Justice or Chastity, and are more easily practis'd than forborn: Indeed tho' you be neither under the Restraint of natural Laws nor divine; Civil Laws may fright you sometimes from the Practice; for Atheists of all Men dote on their Skin, they love not to make a publick intrado into *Old-Baily*, nor to be carted in Geremony to *Hide-Park* Corner. But then what Government can be secure, when subjects obey meerly for want of an Opportunity to rebel? And are only innocent, when Interest forbids them to be guilty?

Theom. This is an odious Subject, pray let us Step over it; I am afraid you will turn Evidence, if Passion carries you a little farther, and I may be put to the Exigence of solving Difficulties at the Bar. I will now return an Answer to your most material Objection. You say if there be no God, that Justice, Temperance, Modesty and Obedience flow from a meer Chymera; that Fiction, Im-

Imposture and Falshood support Society; this you storm at, and throw it among the first Class of Absurdities: But pray reflect, that Ignorance and Policy at *Rome* and *Athens* set up a Multiplicity of Gods, they carv'd Idols of all sizes, and of all Creatures; they perswaded the vulgar, that their mute Statues punish'd Vice, and rewarded Vertue. This Imposture cheated many into Justice, Chastity and Obedience. You cannot deny but Deists were imaginary, that they were as void of Sense, as of Reason, and was so far from being able either to protect their Profelytes, or chastise their Enemies, that they could not defend themselves. Infine, Sir, they were *Nothing*, yet these *Nothings*, these *Chymeras* scar'd People into their Duty, and aw'd 'em into Heroick Flights of Morality. If the Perswasion of a God (tho' there be no such Thing) works the same Effects; where Lies the Absurdity? If Falshood, two thousand Years ago, gull'd People into Submission, and wheedled them into Vertue, it may play over again the same Game in our Age; we are liable to Ignorance, as well as the Athenians or Romans, and what either quicken'd their Hopes, or enliven'd.

ven'd their Fears, may make Impression upon ours.

Euseb. I confess that the Perswasion of the ancient Pagans was erroneous, and false in particular, but not in general: They acknowledg'd a Deity who look'd into human Affairs, and who could once exact a strict Account of their most minute Actions; so far they were right, but then when they applied this Notion of a God to Stocks or Stones, to wicked Men or accursed *Demons*, they deviated from Truth: The Principle therefore of these Men was true, viz. *A God*: But the Application of it to *Jupiter, Mars* or *Venus* was erroneous; for these were Persons of most profligate Morals: The first, an Adulterer, the second, a Murtherer, and the third, a most impudent Harlot. So that neither the Attributes of a Divinity, nor the Managment of the World, nor the Vengeance of ill Actions, nor the Reward of good ones belong'd to them. Now when Men abstain'd from Immorality out of Fear of offending God, or practis'd Vertue out of Desire to please him, they were not mov'd by this Perswasion, that there was a supream Being, who hated ill and lov'd good; and

and would punish that and reward this, which universal Perswasion is most true, and Vertue that stands on this Principle, has no *Chymera* to support it: Indeed they clapt the Divinity on Men, invested Devils with its great Prerogatives, and worship'd those Gods of their own Institution; and so blundered about the particular Subject of Adoration, notwithstanding they retain'd the Notion of a Deity able to chastise the Wicked, and so had a kind of true Foundation of political and moral Vertue: But if there be no God, or if he mews himself up in Heaven, without entering into our Concerns, the very Foundation of all Probity, all Subordination is false and fictitious, and by Consequence all Trust, Commerce, Piety and Society are sustain'd by Imposture and Forgery, which is an Opinion so unkind to our very Nature, and so irrational; that no Man can abet it without Folly and Madness.

A Gentleman of the Company interrupting *Eusebius*, Sir, said he, I confess your Arguments have Force; they are Rational, and a Man must be very hard to please that will not relish them. But unless our Souls are immortal, what
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Reason have Men either to love his Goodness, or to fear his Severity? His Blessing must stop with our Breath, and his Curses cannot overtake us in Eternity: For if Death robs us of Life and Being, all our Hopes and Fears are at a Stand: They disappear with our last Sigh, and vanish into Nothing. So that the Doctrine of a God is not sufficient alone to reform Mankind, and all Religion may be regarded as useless, or flung among the Ceremonies; Divines term *Diophora*, for if my Soul be mortal, future Rewards are impossible, as well as Torments: Why then should I court Vertue at the Expence of present Satisfaction? Or withstand Appetite with the Forfeiture of Pleasure? Why should I bridle Lust, or prescribe Bounds to my Ambition? If neither Continence be regarded, nor Pride humbled? For my Part I own ingeniously, I shall make the best Use of Time, till I am sure there is an Eternity. I shall trim up my House of Clay: And lay out my Stock on Reparations: My Passions shall live at Discretion and range withot Controul.

If my Arguments convince you, that there is a God (replied *Eusebius*) You cannot question the Immortality of the Soul. God and the Immortality of the Soul, are Corelatives, and whatever Proof makes for the one establishes the other, for as I hinted above. If there be a God, he is just, and therefore crowns Vertue, and revenges Vice: Now it is evident, that the just oftentimes in this Life receive no Reward; and the Impious no Punishment, therefore they must receive it in the next,; therefore, our Souls must not die with our Bodies; therefore, they are Immortal. Again, if our Souls are immortal, there is a God. For supposing this noble Prerogative which way did the Soul come by it, but by the Goodness and Power of an infinite Agent? It can neither be the Effect of Matter, nor Motion; these Things are below the Level of a Spirit, they have neither Life nor Knowledge, how can they infuse into another those Perfections, that are Strangers to themselves? Did our Souls steal a Being from all Eternity? Where were they before they enter'd our Bodies? Who ordered my Soul to take Possession of my Body rather than of another? Or where did it hover

hover before it found the Settlement? I suppose *Phythagoras's Metempsychosis* is grown out of Fashion in *Europe*, we send Souls no more on Expeditions of Knight-Errantry; they scorn to take up with Swine, or to lodge with Camels and Elephants. If therefore they are immortal Spirits, you cannot avoid a Creator; neither Hazard, Motion or Matter can give us a good Account of their Origin.

Eusebius desir'd another Meeting the next Day, to put an End to the Conference. One Session, said he, addressing himself to the Company, will compleat the Work: And I desire your Presence, I will only draw up in short the Sum of our Dispute, that you may at one View see the strength of my Proofs, and the Weakness of my Adversaries: And then, *Theomachus*, if (in spite of Light) you resolve to remain in Darkness (after I have detected your Errors) I'll pity your Obstinacy. The Company accepted of the Appointment, and so broke up. But *Theomachus*, after mature Deliberation, thought best to wave the Interview; he had been too often foil'd to venture another Push: Besides he perceiv'd that some of the
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tle men began to waver: The Reasons of *Eusebius* had done Execution; altho' indeed none had declar'd for Religion, many approv'd it; so that he fear'd another Conference, with a short Exhortation might detatch some, and weaken his Party. And if the Success of the Controversy should be put to Vote, he foresaw nothing but Shame for himself, and Victory for his Antagonist: But the Matter being not determin'd (said he to one of his Intimates like those who have a suit depending, we may both pretend Right, and So we shall part Stakes. But to withdraw handsomly, he sent *Eusebius* this Letter.

S I R,

I Am sorry Necessity has forc'd me to dis-appoint you to Morrow; an unforeseen Affair requires my Absence from Town; 'tis both important and pressing, so that I cannot retarde my Departure one Day without great Prejudice to my Concerns, and Danger to a Relation. I therefore disengage my Word, and presume you will excuse and pardon my Incivility: When I have rid my Hands of this troublesome accident,

You may command,
Yours.

S I R,

Eusebius read the true Design of *The- amachus* under his false Pretence; and easily perceiv'd he retir'd to avoid both Conviction and Confusion, and indeed it's hard to determine which he dreaded most. For he was jealous of his Honour to Phrenzy, and obstinate in Infidelity to Madness. Notwithstanding *Eusebius* next Morning met the other Gentlemen at the Rendezvous, who were concerned at the sudden Retreat of their Hero, yet some excus'd, tho' others blam'd him. *Eusebius* addressing himself to the Company, spoke to this Purpose.

The Conclusion of the Conference.

Gentlemen,

WE meet to Day, to finish the Dispute; and I thought the Controversy also, but the unexpected Retreat, (I would say Flight) of *Theomachus* has baffl'd my Hopes. Had he not suspected the Justice of his Cause, why did he so shamefully desert it? I had no Design on his Honour, but on his Impiety. I should have disclaim'd the Glory of Conquest, had he but acknowledg'd his Defeat, and abjur'd an Error, that will at last ruin him, and those who inconsiderately abet it. Nay, an humble Confession of the Truth had secur'd his Reputation from Obloquy; the Blemish had fallen on the Cause, not on his Wit; but the Glory of Submission to the Truth had been wholly imputed to his Candour and the Sincerity of his Temper. People had thrown the Reproach of Atheism, rather on the Misinformation of his Understanding, than

than on the Perverseness of his Will, so that he could only fear to be esteem'd more unfortunate than criminal: But this ungentile Flight lays him open to the Severity of Censure, and all understanding Men must necessarily conclude, he wanted Abilities to defend a bad Cause, and Conscience to disown it. But I'll leave him to himself, and where can he be more uneasy, than in his own Company? Tho' he be without a God, he is not without Fear, and who can sleep secure that harbours such a Fury? Atheists (like the *China* Mandarins) are waited on by Hangmen, that punish their own Delinquencies; They can never avoid the Arrest and Execution of their Consciences, tho' they make a Sport of God, and a Diversion of Crimes in publick, they are more serious in private; which is a shrew'd Sign their Atheism is imaginary, tho' their Impiety be real. *A God or no God* Gentlemen is an important Question; and those who incline to the *Negative*, would do well to examin it with Care, with Study, with Coolness, and Impartiality, before they come to a final Resolution. When the *Athenians* heard of the Death of their mortal Enemy *Philip*

lip the *Macedonian*, they were presently for manifesting their Joy by some publick Scene of Jolity : But a Fellow among the Crowd *bid 'em first be sure he was Dead*, least one Day they might find him alive by the Severity of his Revenge. The Atheists of all Men should follow this wholsome, this prudent Advice; and nothing but a strict Demonstration can secure him : For all the plausible Sophisms in the World will never rescue him from Danger ; nor by consequence his Election from Folly : For so long as he is not demonstratively secure, there is no Deity ; for any thing he knows there is one ; and if there be, he will certainly feel the Existence of that dreadful Majesty he deny'd, by the Rigour of his Justice : It's therefore our Interest to believe there is a God ; and to square our Actions by this Belief ; for we can be no losers by Credulity ; but may be undone eternally by Infidelity : Indeed the Atheist is sensible enough his Case is desperate, if there be a God, and if one may believe him, wishes nothing more, than that it were in his Power to credit his Being : But (says he) this is the proper Work of Demonstration : Evidence alone settles the

the Judgment of which I am wholly unfurnish'd: But this is a Blindness rather than an Excuse: A petty Artifice to excite Compassion, or to hide Folly and Madness under the Dress of Sincerity; If they expect Mathematical Evidence, they will die Atheists, for such Conviction is impossible, and he that will only submit to Proofs, of which the Matter is incapable, should rather purge than dispute: He is fitter for Physick than Reason; and I would counsel him to shave and air his Brain.

Now let me desire you Gentlemen, by all that is dear, to take this Matter into Consideration, it deserves Time, Thought, and Reflection. The Question is whether, there be a God who Eternally rewards Vertue, and eternally punishes Vice. What can be more important, than to be well inform'd on which Side of the Contradiction Truth lies? If in the next world there be no high Court of Justice, no Judge, no Account taken either of Good or Evil: Why should Men force Appetite? Storm Inclination, or bridle Desire? Why should they forego the Enjoyments of this Life, and sell a present Satisfaction for a vain Expectation of a future Felicity?

But then if there be a God, Atheists are in ill Circumstances, they must take leave of Life and Pleasure together; and give a sad Farewell to Delights. Their last Breath extinguishes Joy, and kindles a Flame not to consume, but to torment them eternally. Their Musick will end in Tears, their Pleasure in Repentance, and their Repentance in Despair. Its a doleful Catastrophe to be dragg'd from a Palace into a Dungeon; and from the Embraces of a *Dabila* into those of everlasting Flames. What Man in his Senses would take the most glittering, and most gaudy Happiness in the World, together with such a dreadful Reversion of Torments? Yet if there be *Scientia in Excelsis*, Knowledge and Justice above (that is a God) the Infidel Atheist will burn below; and feel the just Revenge of that powerful Majesty he so obstinately denied.

Now Gentlemen, the Matter standing thus: withdraw from Hurry and Passion, take off all Affection from the present; divorce wholly from this World till you are sure there is no such thing as an other. Argue with your selves thus: I believe *I am lawfully begotten*; I believe *I am baptiz'd*: And never doubted of either.

Yet

Yet I have the bare Testimony of my Mothers for the Truth of the first, and perchance the sole Authority of a Parson, or a Midwife for the Belief of the second. But all Nations tell me there is a God as well as Ages: Why threfore shall the Word of one Woman, or of one Man, not only sway, but fix and settle my Judgment in those Cases, and not the Joint Testimony of all Men in this? I cannot contemplate the petty Springs of a Watch, or the rude Contrivance of a Cabane, but presently the Sight leads me naturally to an Artificer. I cannot possibly ascribe the Frame of either to blind Chance, or fatal Necessity; and tho' I fool my Understanding, and enslave my Reason in a thousand Occasions, in this I cannot. They disobey the most pressing Commands of the Will, they pronounce boldly inspite of Practice and Inclination; that some Hand put the Wheels together, and rais'd the Cottage.

The most ill shap'd Animal in the World, the most despicable Leaf are more finely contriv'd than all the Machines, that ever Art invented. If therefore the petty Fabrick of a Watch, the unpolish'd Frame of a poor Cottage con-

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vince me they were made by the Hand of an Artificer. Must I not confess this majestick Pile of the World, so vast, so various, so stupendious was first contriv'd by the Wisdom, and then created by the Power of a most perfect Agent? If a less Motive sways my Judgment, a greater may: And if my Assent be both firm and prudent in one Case, certainly it cannot be unstable and imprudent in the other. A Child may make these Reflections; they are easy, obvious and convincing. Reason therefore, and Interest plead strongly against Atheism; and you cannot abet it without betraying both.

Prostrate (I beseech you) your selves with bended Knees, and bleeding Hearts, before the Throne of that dread Majesty you have so often provok'd by your Immorality, and abjured by your Infidelity. Obstinacy enflames his Justice; but Tears extinguish it. It's in your Power either to try the Weight of his Anger, or the Sweetness of his Mercy. But if Atheism waits on you to his Tribunal, you must expect nothing but Damnation. God's Greatness will fright you, his Power will disarm you, and his Justice eternally torment you. In spite of
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Bravado's, Conscience will not only act the Part of an Accuser, but of an Executioner also. It will revenge with Interest those Rapes and Violences you have committed against it here: And turn those kind Admonitions, you receiv'd with Raillery into so many Instruments of Punishment.

Gentlemen dare you put these Things to a venture? Will you live in Infidelity, as unconcernedly, as if all the Terrors of another World were only frightful Dreams of Men awake? or meer Productions of a feavourish and discompos'd Brain? Certainly I have made the Existence of a God too clear to be thought Fancy or Vision. And then I expect Prudence will not permit you to think it a Matter not to be regarded, whether you are eternally happy or miserable.

At least if you are resolv'd to play in this Life and to weep in the other decoy not unwary Gentlemen into so Mad a Resolution: Their Pains will not ease yours. If you plot against their Purse, have no Design upon their Religion. Scoff them not out of their *Creed*, tho' you wheedle them out of their Estates, when you have swept away their present Stock, force them not to make over
their

their Title to Heaven. You can gain nothing by their Loss; for the same Time you railly them out of Heaven, you jest your selves into Hell.

Besides, were the Existence of a God, the Truth of Religion doubtful, yet they should be thought on with Seriousness, and spoken of with Reverence; for People put a great Stress on both. they look upon the Belief of a Deity, and the Practise of Religion here as necessary for their Happiness hereafter. They acknowledge it is not only their Duty, but also their Interest to believe a God, and to worship him. Methinks therefore it's a Breach of Civility and a Failure in Breeding; its an Affront to Christians, as well as to their Maker to turn the Object of their Adoration into Sport and Diversion, and their Expectation into Romance. So that you cannot be prophane without being Clowns. Pray therefore (at least for your Reputation's Sake) employ your Wits and Tongues on a more creditable Subject. Certainly Wit is not grown so sacrilegious, as not to be pleas'd without polluting holy Things. A Man may bath well without Blasphemy, and lay in a very

very fair Pretension to Ingenuity without being guilty of Profaneness.

To draw towards an End, if you intend to search Truth with Serenity and Candour, take leave of Drollery, preach not down God, Religion and Sobriety, but treat with Respect those things Mankind reveres, for Men seldom honour what they ridicule; much less will they prostrate themselves to what they burlesque. Shake off therefore this buffooning Humour, and when the Tongue is brought under Discipline, the Heart will throw off all the Lets of Prejudice and Passion; and then the Understanding disengag'd from Violence, will easily submit to the Force of those Reasons I have laid before you.

But if you run on in a lewd Vein of Drollery and Impiety, the most persuasive Arguments in the World will never work upon you; you'll certainly sport your selves into Damnation, and sink down laughing into Hell. But then those Flames that Consume Mirth, will awake Despair. You'll begin to be both serious and wise, when 'twill
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be too late to be so. Oh, 'how foolish?
how imprudent is it to deny a Deity
in this World, and to believe one in
the other! To live Atheists in London,
and Theists in Hell!

F I N I S.

